Spotlight:  Rachel Turner

We would like to introduce to you an integral member of our team at Riverside Criminal Justice Agency. Rachel Turner is the Office Manager for Riverside Criminal Justice Agency; she began working at RCJA on June 1, 2009. Rachel graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2004 with a major in Marketing. Prior to working for RCJA, she worked for Virginia Department of Transportation. Rachel was born and raised in Prince George County, VA. When asked why she enjoys working at RCJA, she explained that she loves supporting and making a difference in her community. She is invested in those around her and truly brings her enthusiasm and vivacity to RCJA.

Rachel means is when she says she is invested in her community and Prince George County. She is not only involved in Prince George County’s Wellness Committee and National Night Out Committee, but enjoys being the media relations specialist for Prince George Promise and the It can be difficult at times, as the years pass, to keep staff engaged in Learning Teams. As a result, we recently revamped our bi-monthly Learning Team meetings. The hour-long meeting now has a team captain with staff rotating as the facilitator for each meeting. Each group contains four to five staff members, but we are no longer divided by pretrial or local probation. Groups are now a combination of staff! The purpose of our teams continues to be to strengthen our rapport and communication skills with our clients based on evidence based practices and to promote consistency. We discuss various topics to include dealing with difficult clients, rolling with resistance, appropriate feedback, effective communication and motivational interviewing refresher topics, etc. In these meetings, we also review any assignments or activities from the last meeting, discuss any positive experiences/struggles that may have occurred since the last meeting. We strive to put any given topic into application, and to ensure the meetings are productive. The meetings are also fun! We are employing various activity ideas to include games such as Charades, Pictionary or Jeopardy to merge learning styles, even scavenger hunts for research and fresh approaches. We actually ate popcorn while reviewing staff videos with clients from past years! We look forward to maintaining the spirit of EBP and building momentum with our revamped Learning Teams.

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A Glimpse Inside of RCJA

At Riverside Criminal Justice Agency, there is a lot more going on than just seeing our clients. While staff is committed to providing the best supervision and resources to our offenders and defendants as possible, the agency also has new goals each six months to guide us towards growing and improving our agency that ultimately impact our clients and constituents. The goals are sometimes quite expansive and incorporate many facets of our impact on the community. Some of the goals we are currently working towards include:

1. Facilitating a CCJB activity related to juvenile and reentry issues.
2. Hosting our own Sixth Judicial Pretrial Symposium for our judiciary.
3. Furthering the development of our participation in the Gang Task Force.
4. Implementing regular home visits with Police/Sheriff’s departments in our three localities.
5. Holding a Drug Court fundraising event.
6. Implementing individualized skill set training for staff.
7. Hosting a job fair for clients with local community colleges, businesses, & technical training.
8. Exploring additional safety training for staff.
9. Revamping our Internship Program.

At times, this seems like an awful lot of work, and it is! However, we take the approach of divide and conquer. Staff volunteer to work on goals based upon their interests and skills; then they tackle one goal at a time. This approach is utilized often actually. Individualized skill set training was a perfect example of this aspect. Staff members were asked, based on their own strengths, to work with co-workers on several skill building topics. This means of peer support was received well by most. Topics included communication, time management, multi-tasking and organization. Staff met with staff individually over a course of three meetings to complete a skill set. The first meetings introduced the purpose and explored the skill set of the individual. In that meeting, staff explored the strengths in that category and assisted in identifying where improvements could be made. During the second meeting, staff observed their co-workers and suggested techniques, processes, or new strategies that may be helpful. The final meeting was a follow-up on how the suggestions had worked and to determine if there was further need for change. It was an eye opening experience where staff had the opportunity to learn from each other’s strengths.

Updates on other goals include the Job Fair, our Internship Program, and regular home visits. Staff have begun contacting employers and educational institutions to determine their interest for a Job Fair. Interest letters have been sent, and we are awaiting responses. It is anticipated that the Job Fair will take place in April or May. We have begun the process to improve our Internship Program as well. The focus will be developing a recruitment process and a training curriculum to illicit the best experience for both the agency and the intern. And lastly, beginning March 26th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, designated staff will ride with a Prince George Community Police Officer to visit our clients, especially those placed on curfew by the courts. This will take place the last Thursday of every month. Strides are being made on all of our other goals as well! While these additional tasks sometimes seem to get in the way of our normal job duties, the end result is always worth it.
In 2011, Prince George County Administrator, Percy C. Ashcraft initiated the development of Prince George Promise; an organization devoted to helping create the conditions for success for all young people, including those currently being left behind. Prince George Promise promotes the belief that all children are capable of learning and thriving, and that every individual, institution and sector shares the responsibility in creating the essential conditions for all young people to have a real chance of success. The goal is to make the promise of America accessible to all young people. In order to achieve this, Mr. Ashcraft assembled a group of 38 community stakeholders and organizations to form a working foundation known as PG Promise. He then developed By-Laws, Articles of Organization, and a Board of Directors to carry out the Five Promises that must be made and kept to every young person within our community; caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to serve. Research shows that young people who experience at least four of the promises are far more likely to succeed academically, socially, economically and civically. RCJA is one of the original stakeholders of PG Promise, and staff participate in events such as the Annual Christmas Parade, the Reverse Raffle, serve on the grant review committee as well as the Board of Directors, and maintain the PG Promise website. While RCJA does not directly deal with the children of our community, the knowledge that has been gained from our involvement with PG Promise has been a resource for our clients with children. The networking, fellowship, and cooperation of the organizations involved in this initiative have provided insight and resources to us all.

Some time ago, Prince George County established a Wellness Committee, known as the WOW Committee or Wellness Our Way! Recognizing that employees perform their best when they are healthy, and that optimal employee performance is necessary for the government to provide the best services possible to citizens, the health promotion program aims to improve employee health and well-being. The mission of the Prince George County Wellness Program is to enhance organizational health by fostering interest and encouraging employees to initiate or expand healthier lifestyles, provide diverse wellness programs to meet a wide range of personal health needs, recognize employees for participating in healthier lifestyles activities, decrease absenteeism due to illness and stress, and develop a positive culture that is focused on celebrating and improving the quality of life for all employees.

The wellness program encourages all staff to pursue a healthy lifestyle. It is designed to promote the physical, social, emotional, and mental health of county employees, thus promoting better overall health, improved morale, and a greater personal commitment to the County’s business of providing services to citizens. Aside from saving on health care costs, a wellness program could be seen as a way to spur recruitment, improve daily attendance and staff morale, earn the loyalty of workers, and promote employees’ general health and well-being.

Each year, free health screenings are offered to all employees on site of the Health Expo. This year we were able to take the “Real Age Test” that let you know how old your body really is. Many of us were not happy with the results…

So what are we going to do about it? Well our staff decided we were going to do many things about it! Many of us joined events and activities sponsored on-site by the WOW Committee. Staff joined Weight Watcher’s, play on the County’s Volleyball team, are signed up for the bowling team scheduled to begin soon, and participate in the STEPS walking challenges.

Staff have actively participated on the WOW Committee for numerous years. They have created challenges for county employees as well as for staff within our own department to keep us engaged and focused. Examples include the Biggest Loser Competition, the STEPS Challenges, Pick It Up, Give It Up, the Plank Challenge, and the Healthy Recipe Contest.

The WOW Committee was recently successful in developing and implementing a Healthy Living Day off for employees who use minimal personal sick time during the year. Administrative leave is awarded to employees who meet the specific criteria. The Committee is always looking for new ideas and incentives to continue encouraging employees to engage in healthier lifestyles. We would welcome any suggestions you may have!
Do You Ever Think About Your Attitude?

I can make you rise or fall.
I can make you a success or failure.
I can work for or against you.
I control your feelings and actions.
I can make your heart sing with happiness.
I can make you wretched, dejected, or morbid.
I can make you angry and resentful.
I can make you lonely, discouraged or depressed.
I can make you sick, listless.
I can be a shackle, heavy and burdensome.
I can be a prism’s hue, dancing bright and colorful.
I can be nurtured and grown to be beautiful.
I can never be removed, only replaced.

I AM YOUR ATTITUDE!

Training Events

- Probation Officer, Lauren Bingham and Office Associate Tracy Adams attended CIT Awareness Training at Crater Criminal Justice Academy
- Director Bettina Coghill, Senior Probation Officer Tracey Jordan-Fotias and Office Manager Rachel Turner attended the Annual Drug Court Conference.
- Pretrial Officer, Justin Gigli attended the Virginia Gang Training Conference
- Several staff attended the Annual VCCJA Conference
- Probation Officer, Debra West completed Basic Skills

POINTS TO PONDER... Something to Take Away

Attitude is defined as a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person’s behavior. Attitudes are all around us and indeed impact our behavior. There are three main aspects of attitudes at work; cognitive, affective, and conative. Cognitive represents our thoughts and beliefs. Affective represents our feelings and emotions. And, conative focuses on our actions. The challenge in the workplace is that these components are tied to work functions, policy, procedures and organizational structure, as well as the individuals present in the organization. Negative attitudes within the workplace can lead to several problems. A negative atmosphere within a workplace can lead to declining morale and a poor work environment. This in turn, leads to lack of productivity and difficulty retaining employees so that they are positive and lead to a healthy environment. The tone of the manager or supervisor sets the tone for the entire office. If you want your employees to be positive, be the first one to set a good example. We must also find ways to motivate our employees. Every person is unique and will have unique motivators that help create a positive attitude. Some employees may be goal oriented and need to feel they are accomplishing their goals as well as being recognized for their achievements. Others are motivated by monetary rewards. We must discover works each of our employees and implement strategies to motivate them. We also know that one employee with a bad attitude can ruin the entire atmosphere of your office. Reach out to those employees and discuss the reason for their poor attitude. Give them the opportunity to improve their behavior. If they choose not to, you may have to remove them. It is also important to create the right atmosphere. A clean, well maintained work environment may impact the morale of staff. The office should create a cheery tone. And, employees need to feel appreciated through praise, encouragement, and acknowledgement of good attitudes...

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