

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

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Arkansas Community Correction

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Clean -N- Saline

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Drug Courts are changing lives

Stories on pages 2-6

Saline County Drug Court empowers people

By Margaret Linker, Drug Court Counselor

As 2016 neared its end, there were 59 people in the Saline County Drug Court in Benton and of that number, 56 are employed and three have returned to school to continue their education.

“Drug Court is about empowering people to be the best they can be and learn to believe in themselves,” says Drug Court Counselor Margaret Linker.

In addition to work and school, there are some offenders who are taking the necessary steps to clean up their past so they can start their own business, Linker says.

“We have some that in a short period of time have advanced where they work and are working to become management.

“We also have several participants that have joined gyms in the area and are working on improving their overall health with exercise and changing their diet.

“One of our participants has been able to stop taking her diabetic and high blood pressure medication due to her weight loss and change in lifestyle,” said Linker.

In February 2016 I was honored to be able to transfer and work with the 22nd Judicial District Saline County Drug Court.

The team that I am honored to be able to work with is Judge Bobby McCallister, Prosecuting Attorney Andy Gill, Public Defender Chris Walton, Drug Court Officer Deborah Gorham and Drug Court Admin Lisa Hill. In conjunction with this team we also have the support of AM Shawanna Reynolds and AAM Darnell Williams, both of whom support us in our efforts to help these offenders change their lives.

We also have the assistance of all of the officers at Benton Probation/Pa-
role office that are there and willing to assist us when the need arises.

As a team we began talking about ways that we could get our clients involved in the community and some positive activities that they could become involved in.

After talking with offenders, we found that there were about 30 out of 65 who were interested in playing softball, so we began looking for places that offered league playing. We found that Benton Parks and Recreation had a Fall Ball league.

So we got the information and carried that back to the offenders and then they began seeking sponsors to help them with the cost of getting started.

With the help of State Fair Funnel Cakes and Edwards Construction, the team was able to pay the entry fee and purchase balls and they also had a banner created to acknowledge their sponsors - which was displayed at each of their games.

That was when the team “Clean-N-Saline” was started.

Shortly after Fall League had began, some of the offenders found out about a benefit tournament for a 9th grade boy in Poyen who had been burned over 75% of his body, and they wanted to participate in the tournament to help him and his family. They rallied together and pooled their money for the entry fee and for their home runs. And to Poyen we went on October 8.

Each of the participants stated that they were happy they were able to participate in the event and to be able to help someone else.

We wrapped up softball season on October 26, and on October 28 we had

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A look at Lonoke Co. Drug/Veterans Court

By Rodney Ford, ACC's Lonoke County Drug Court Parole/Probation Agent

In 20 years, I have seen many programs come and go from ACC, but Drug Court is truly a success story. It is one of the few programs I have seen that truly works. I do not give my endorsement lightly but I give Drug/Veterans Court two thumbs up.



Since 2010 I have served as the parole/probation agent working in the Lonoke county Drug Court and have a varied career with ACC, having worked as an intensive supervision probation officer, a parole officer and an assistant area manager.

We were the first rural Drug and Veterans Court in the state.

The Lonoke County Drug/Veterans Court was formed in 2004 under the leadership of Judge Phillip Whitaker who has since been elected to the Arkansas Court of Appeals.

Our current Judge, Sandy Huckabee, has presided over the Court since 2013.

Our team members are: Judge Sandy Huckabee, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Ben Hooper, Public Defender Larry Cook, Paralegal Sara Talbert, Assistant Area Manager Kim Lloyd, Probation/Parole Agent Rodney Ford, ACC Advisor Earlene Wainwright, VA Liaison Michael "Toby" Lambert, and VA Mentor Sam High.

The Lonoke County Drug/Veterans Court is at minimum, an 18-month program with three Phases and Aftercare.

Participants spend at least 12 weeks in Phase I, 16 weeks in Phase II, 16 weeks in Phase III and six months in Aftercare.

Once an offender graduates from the program, he or she receives an early discharge from probation and their record is either dismissed or sealed depending on which Act they were sentenced under.

Earlier this year we received a Drug Court Mini-Grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts that we used to purchase t-shirts for promotions to Phases II and III, a sobriety coin unique to our Drug Court and given to participants when they promote to Aftercare, and a plaque given to participants when they graduate the program, all featuring designs I created.

We also have used the Mini-Grant money to fund a reception in honor of National Drug Court Month. Attendees included state legislators, judges, sheriffs, police chiefs, attorneys, prosecutors, treatment providers and local officials. A plaque was presented to VA Mentor Sam High who volunteers his time serving our veterans in the program. The reception was a huge success in increasing Drug Court awareness. We plan to have our first ever banquet honoring current and past Drug/Veterans Court graduates. Lonoke First Baptist Church has offered the use of their facility for this event.



Lonoke County Drug Court Judge Sandy Huckabee is shown at left with Drug Court offenders showing the t-shirts purchased to indicate success in moving through the phases of the court. In the photograph below, at left, a Drug Court offender is presented with a t-shirt denoting graduation into Phase III of the program. In the photograph below, at right, a Drug Court offender is shown receiving a plaque that indicates she has finished the program and is graduating from the Drug Court.



Mississippi County Drug Court helps children

In support of their community, Mississippi County Drug Court offenders and staff chose to support local kids in the state's foster care system this past Christmas.

Offenders approached Officer Heidi McDaniel expressing their desire to give back to the community during the Christmas season and, after a little information gathering, she came up with a project to help furnish Christmas gifts for Mississippi County kids in foster care around the state.

Working with the foster care coordinator in the county through the State Department of Human Services, it was found that 81 residents of the county were in foster care in several surrounding counties. The children ranged in age from newborn to 18 years old and were almost evenly divided between boys and girls.

Each Drug Court participant received one hour of community service credit for every \$5 spent on the project. The response to the program was overwhelming. Offenders spent nearly \$500 on gifts and sought donated items to be given to the children. Other members of the Drug Court team got involved, including Judge Ralph Wilson Jr., Prosecuting Attorney Catherine Dean and Public Defender John Bradley. One PPO officer, Agent Heather Godair, even donated several items.

Thanks to the combined effort, each child received at least four gifts each. Even the infants received multiple gifts including bibs, pacifiers, teething rings, blankets and hooded towels. Toddlers received toys, sippy cups, socks and stuffed animals. The older children received age-appropriate toys and games along with sports equipment, bath items and make-up for the teenagers.

The gifts were presented to Peggy Harris, Mississippi County's foster children coordinator, on December 21 after a regular session of Drug Court. She was overjoyed at the truckload of items the participants donated to the foster kids. She stated that even though foster parents receive compensation for being foster parents, the burden of paying for Christmas gifts is sometimes too great. She expressed her gratitude to every person who donated or obtained items to the project.

It is hoped that the project will continue year after year.



Participants in Mississippi County Drug Court recently purchased Christmas gifts for Mississippi County kids in foster care. They are: kneeling from left, Steven Hamilton, Jennifer Allison and Alfred Johnson; Standing middle, from left, Celeta Cagle, Courtney Cases, Paula Smith, Michael Sparks and back row, standing: Gary Tacker, Rudolph Zangerl and Carey Graham. Not pictured is Hunter Rolland.

Offender moves from drugs to fashion

Sannecia Davis created a fashion show at the Hilton Garden featuring seven designers from all over the world and two local boutiques.

Which doesn't sound like much of an accomplishment. But it is. Davis graduated from a Drug Court in ACC's Area 6 (Faulkner, Conway, Perry, Yell and Pope Counties) and has since had her record sealed.

She organized the show to bring awareness to domestic violence and inspire women to seek second chances at a better life.

Davis wanted to give back to the Bethlehem House and she selected four ladies to walk in her clothing line BlessedGals. The show was very moving and had people in tears. It was a sell-out show with more than 250 people attending.

Davis shown in the photograph at right with her daughter.

In the picture below is Jennifer Mc-



Caskill (Cunningham) who is still in Drug Court, Davis, and Sara Pruitt who graduated the Drug Court Program and now is on unsupervised probation.

The ACC staffs Drug Courts throughout the state offering intensive supervision and counseling to adult felony offenders who are in trouble because of drug addictions.

The courts have operated since the late 1990s and have helped thousands of offenders lead a drug and crime-free life.

Two graduate from the Johnson/Franklin County Drug Court



Johnson/Franklin County Drug Court held a graduation celebration in Clarksville at the Clarksville City Hall with two Drug Court participants, Jeff Wheeler and Virginia Villanueva, graduating. In attendance of the ceremony was 5th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Gordon “Mack” McCain Jr., ACC Deputy Director Jerry Bradshaw, Assistant Director Mike Thomas, Clarksville Mayor Mark Simpson, Ozark Mayor TR McNutt, State Drug Court Coordinator Kari Powers, Clarksville Police Chief Kevin Weathers, Johnson County Sheriff Larry Jones, Johnson County Chief Deputy Shannon Holeman, ACC Assistant Treatment Program Manager of the North West Area Randi Jo Nielson, 5th Judicial District Deputy Prosecutor Steve Higgins, Area 5 Assistant Area Manger Wendi Phillips, State Representative from the 69th District Betty Overbey, Ozark City Council and Franklin County Literacy Commission Victoria Vicars, Parole/Probation Agent Josh Beerman and Parole/Probation Officer Christi Burnett. Kari Powers was the speaker. The Johnson/Franklin County Drug Court started in 2006. Up to this date, we have had more than 100 offenders graduate from Drug Court.

Area 4 Agent finds his joy in sharing books with children



Area 4 Agent Trey Johnson, shown at left, reads books to the kids at Blytheville Primary School. The class was comprised of 5-year-olds, and Johnson is reading the book *A Ball for Daisy*. The kids enjoyed his visit. Johnson has been asked to come back again in the future to read again. Great time for this Agent to give back to the community he lives and works in.

A note of appreciation for the Southwest Center from Board Member Buddy Chadick

What a pleasant surprise I had Tuesday. I went to Steve Arnold's unit on an unannounced visit. Whoa, I was blown away.

Steve gave me an in-depth look at our operation. Firstly, it is the cleanest unit from kitchen to bedding area I have experienced. Secondly, Steve absolutely knew each and every staff member and a summary of their background and what they did. Thirdly, he gave me a precise look at what that unit does. Fourthly, the residents are well mannered and disciplined.

Finally, Mr. Arnold knew many of the residents by name.

After my tour and inspection I give Southwest AR Community Correction Center 100% and I know Mr. Magness doesn't give anyone 100% but he would change his mind with a visit.

Central Arkansas Center hosts Advisory Board

The Central Arkansas Center in Little Rock hosted its annual Civilian Advisory Board Dinner, as shown in the photograph below. In addition to board members, others in attendance included Chief Deputy Director Kevin Murphy, Deputy Director Jimmy Banks and Assistant Directors Jodi Howard and Carrie Williams.

The dinner is held at least once each year for local citizens/citizen groups who have volunteered to serve on a board that advises the center on community issues and concerns.



Having a board for each center that meets at least annually is an ACA requirement.

Each board is provided information about what the center in their community is doing, and the board is given an opportunity to provide input as to what the community sees as needs for each center.

Board members are selected by each Center Supervisor or by the Center's management team and key personnel.



As part of re-entry efforts, the Northeast Center in Osceola has been working collaboratively with the Arkansas Northeastern College in Blytheville. NEC was invited to attend a banquet honoring the mentoring efforts of individuals/agencies in the community. Pictured are Chaplain John Henson, Center Supervisor Jerry Campbell, Treatment Coordinator Flossie Lane and Treatment Supervisor Walter Towne at the banquet.

Five ACC centers receive licensure

Congratulations are in order for the Community Correction Centers at Fayetteville, West Memphis, Osceola, Texarkana, and Little Rock in the recent residential treatment program licensure review from the Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS) ensuring a renewal of their licenses for three-year terms.

Great job to each of these facilities in continuing to achieve licensure standards as residential substance abuse treatment programs.

The DBHS Manager of Certification & Licensing, stated in her report to administration, “My compliments to ... all staff on such an excellent review for such a large agency!! Thanks for your cooperation and for being so very pleasant to work with. Most people really have no idea about everything you guys do for our citizens and how well you do it!”



Staff from the Southwest Arkansas Center in Texarkana with Bridget Atkins from the Dept. of Human Services.

Learning to live through a Therapeutic Community

By Jodi Howard, CS, CCDP-B, ADC, CTTS, ACC Assistant Director for Residential Treatment

What is a Therapeutic Community (T.C.)?

Therapeutic Communities are a common form of long-term residential treatment for substance use disorders. T.C.s have a recovery orientation, focusing on the whole person and overall lifestyle changes, not just abstinence from drugs.

T.C.s encourage residents to examine their personal behavior to help them become more pro-social and to engage in “right living.” Right living is based on honesty, taking responsibility, hard work, and a willingness to learn.

As residents progress through the stages/phases of recovery, they assume greater responsibility personally and socially as part of the community.

The entire premise of TC is “community as a method” using active participation in group living and activities to facilitate individual change and attainment of goals, which differs from traditional counseling methods since its focus is “community healing” versus “individual healing.”

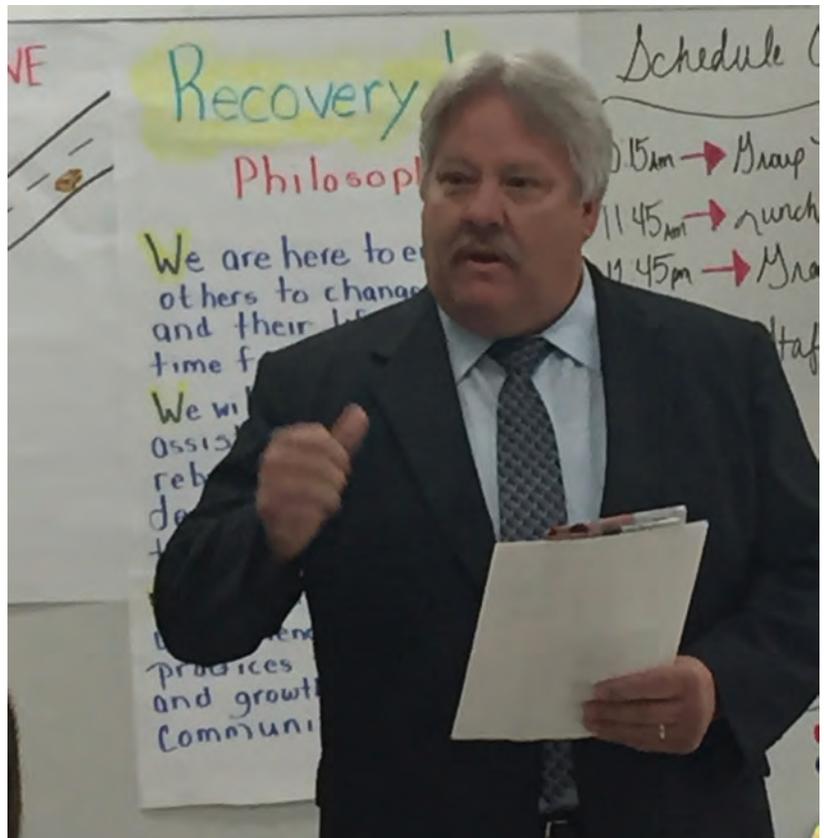
This emphasizes social learning and peer investment and accountability for recovery. Each of our five ACC Community Correction Centers operate as therapeutic communities and the male technical violator program (Omega) has a barracks dedicated to this model with the goal of the entire unit becoming a T.C.

There are women’s facilities in Fayetteville and West Memphis and four male facilities in Little Rock, Texarkana, Osceola, and the TVP Omega unit in Malvern.

In December, a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment grant assisted in providing a one-week Best Practices training for ACC residential personnel through New York Therapeutic Communities, Inc. with a follow up week scheduled in March.

The Stay’n Out Program’s President/CEO, Ron Williams, and Executive Vice President, Seep Varma, traveled to Arkansas and provided the T.C. training to Center Supervisors, Assistant Center Supervisors, Treatment Supervisors, Chief of Security, Treatment Coordinators, S.O.D. staff as well as the administration’s Residential Programs’ Deputy Director, Jimmy Banks, and Assistant Director Jodi Howard, for a total of 25 key personnel.

The Stay’n Out Programs have the longest lasting, most successful prison-based therapeutic community, which was founded in 1977 in New York. Williams and Varma both stated how well Arkansas seems to be doing with the TC programs and just some “tightening up” can be used in key areas to achieve consistency among programs and even better outcomes. They had high praise for the administration’s support and participation and the enthusiasm and hard work of the ACC staff during the training.



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Learning to live through a Therapeutic Community

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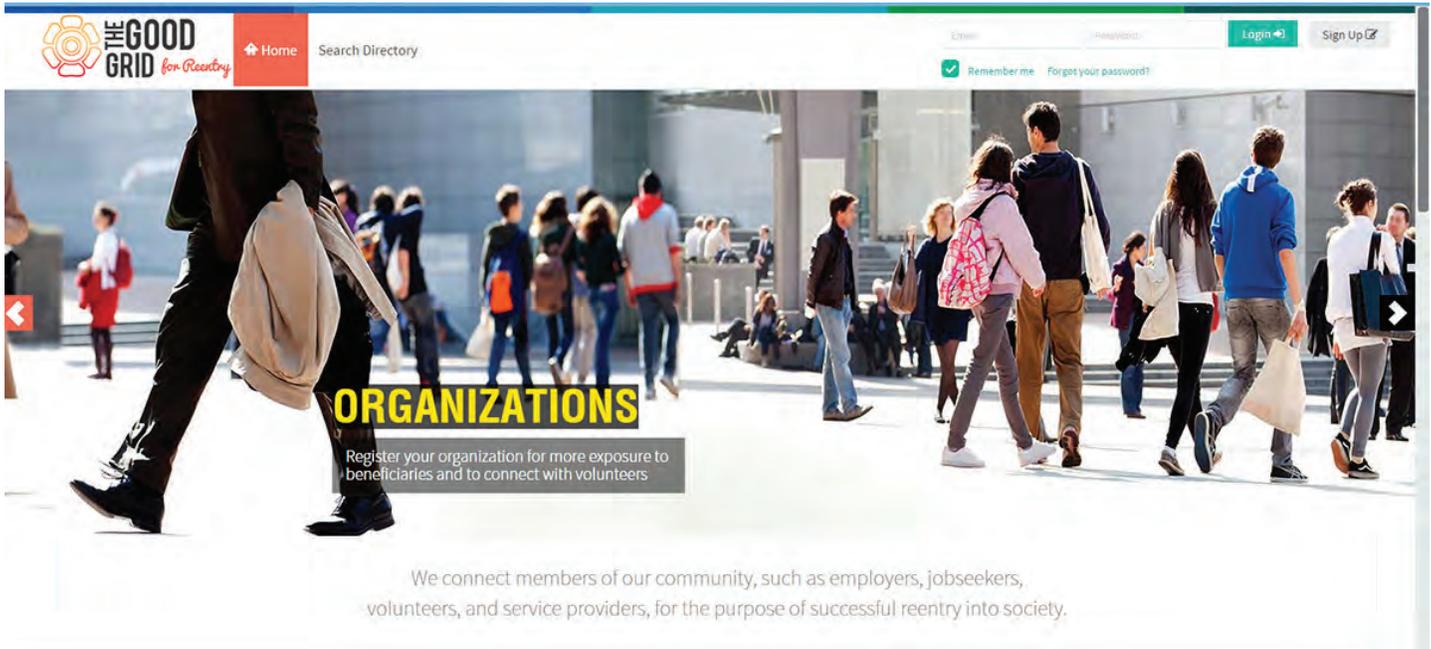
Some highlights of the evidence-based T.C. Concepts and Terminology below:

- Community As Method- role models for right living and pro-social interactions and support;
- Conceptualization- Anyone Can Change- promotion and use of feedback;
- Highly regulated daily treatment, work assignments, and educational activities;
- Treatment focused on the “Here and Now” with concept of responsible concern with group as the primary method to teach;
- Pull Ups- very specific feedback on behavior that a community member needs to change because it is not considered proper conduct;
- Push Ups- very specific feedback on behavior that a community member recognizes as positive behavior reinforcement;
- Disciplinary sanctions for violations to ensure an orderly and productive community;
- Routines include morning and evening meetings as a community;
- Encounter Groups- utilized to address behavioral issues in the community supervised and highly structured activity;
- Work is a distinct component that operates around program activities;
- Each resident is assigned particular tasks or jobs that help teach responsibility and the importance of work, respect, and self-reliance;
- Vocational and educational activities are an essential element of the program;
- 3 Phases of Treatment. Additionally, the Aftercare component in the community following release is an essential element for improved outcomes;
- Recommended length of treatment in a T.C.- 9-12 months optimal outcomes;
- TC Goals: compassion for others; discipline and self-restraint; achievement; responsibility for self and environment.

The training covered the T.C. history of evolution and best practice standards as well as techniques to use through lecture and experiential learning concepts for the participants. The American Correctional Association (ACA) also has standards specifically for accreditation of T.Cs. The Office of National Drug Control policy issued Prison-Based T.C. Standards and each of the Community Corrections Centers completed a self-assessment during the training.



ACC’s Good Grid web site offers much to community



ACC’s Good Grid website is a resource tool geared to connecting felony offenders and the resources in the communities in which they live.

Because of this connection, the web site is an excellent resource for the community - for a business to find employees or for a volunteer group to find volunteers.

As it notes on the site, it was created to connection people and to “help you do what you do better.”

The site address is: <http://www.goodgrid.com/>



The Good Grid is a network of service providers that connects organizations like yours to resources & opportunities that help you do what you do better.

The Best Part?
It is 100% free and easy to create your own page and get started

When you connect, you will be able to:

- Post volunteer & full time opportunities to the community of Arkansans who are passionate about your organization
- Access & search a database of more than 100,000 services
- Publicize events (like fundraisers, marathons, etc.) to a community of social impact minded people
- Manage a microsite for your organization

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

<p>SIGN UP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open a Google Chrome Browser 2. Go to www.goodgrid.com 3. Click Sign up in the Right corner 4. Complete the Sign up process <p style="text-align: right; font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: white;">1</p>	<p>CONFIRM YOUR ACCOUNT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look for the APPROVAL email within 24 hours of signing up. 2. Click Confirm 3. Create your password and sign in. <p style="text-align: right; font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: white;">2</p>	<p>QUESTIONS?</p> <p>Once you sign up, if you have any questions contact us by phone, email, or a help desk ticket.</p> <p>team@goodgrid.com or (501) 687 2346</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: 36px; font-weight: bold; color: white;">3</p>
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ACC staff recognized during counselor's awards banquet



ACC staff were recognized during the 2016 AAADAC (Arkansas Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors) Annual Awards Banquet held in Jonesboro in October. Cassandra Davis, Asst. Treatment Program Manager, North Central Region, is shown at right receiving the Dr. David Powell Memorial Award with Ben Udochi and Jere Brewer (AAADAC president).

This award is given to someone who has demonstrated significant contributions to the field of substance abuse treatment over a period of 10 years or more; has served on local, regional and state Boards/Associations and Initiatives to promote the field of substance abuse treatment; has demonstrated experience in mentoring substance abuse counselors; has demonstrated leadership in promoting the cause of substance abuse services and ethical treatment of clients; has demonstrated personal sacrifice and selflessness in promoting the field of substance abuse treatment; has demonstrated humility and strength of character; and demonstrates a sincere love for others with special compassion for the person with chemical dependency.



Joby Rousseau, Asst. Treatment Program Manager, North East Region, is shown in the photo at the top of the page and Earlene Wainwright, Lonoke ACC Advisor, is shown at left enjoying the banquet.



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ACC staff recognized during counselor's awards banquet

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Susan Hathcote (Searcy ACC Advisor) is shown in the photo at right receiving the Counselor of the Year award.

The Counselor of the Year Award goes to someone who must have more than five years of experience in the field of substance abuse counseling; must be an ADC, AADC, LADAC, or LAADAC in good standing; has demonstrated an exemplary work ethic and provided quality treatment to persons served; has maintained positive relationships with fellow staff and professional colleagues; demonstrates significant mastery over a range of counseling techniques; and has demonstrated humility and strength of character.

Tara Boyce, Walnut Ridge ACC Advisor, in the photo at right on the bottom, is shown receiving the Newcomer of the Year award.

The Newcomer of the Year Award is presented to someone who has demonstrated an exemplary work ethic and provided quality treatment to persons served; has maintained positive peer relationships with fellow staff; demonstrates a sincere desire to learn and master treatment techniques; has participated in a significant amount of formal and in-service training; and has demonstrated humility and strength of character.



ACC staff participate in program on gangs



ACC Agents Amber Vanaman, Kayla Sain, Heather Godair, Robin Angel, Micah Crews, Ashley Stuart, Officer Kristy Robertson and Administrative Assistant Amanda Mills (shown above) were among the 40 people taking a seven-hour workshop held by the Jonesboro FOP Lodge #8 on Gang Recognition and Collaboration Workshop. The workshop was coordinated by ACC Agent Ashley Stuart on behalf of FOP, and officers throughout Northeast Arkansas attended. The class was taught by Little Rock Officer Ronnie Morgan, and it covered a wide variety of gang activity present in Arkansas as well as gang clothing, graffiti and tattoos. The class also learned how communication between agencies is essential in tracking and or preventing gang issues in Northeast Arkansas.



Area 10's Henry works with local athletes



Area 10 Parole/Probation Officer Courtney Henry has been selected to be a mentor for Lake Hamilton Basketball teams.

The school has implemented a program with the junior/senior high basketball teams featuring mentors.

Henry says she is honored to be a part of a mentoring program for young women athletes.

"I am so happy to be a part of this program and to see great things come from Lake Hamilton," she says.

Henry will mentor an athlete from the senior high and an athlete from the junior high.

Henry says she graduated from Lake Hamilton in 2000 and was involved in five sports.

"My dad passed away in 2008 and was my teacher and tennis coach and inspired me to become who I am

today. (He was also prior Law Enforcement until he had to medically retire).

"I have been involved with the Lake Hamilton community since I attended beginning in the 6th grade. I have a 7th grader on the 7th grade basketball team and she also plays on the Jr. High team. I also have a 7th grade foster daughter on the 7th grade team.

"I have a 4-year-old who will start LH next year. LH is part of Hot Springs/Garland county. I was asked by the high school basketball coach (Blake Condley) if I would mentor a junior high and high school basketball player."

Henry says that all of the mentors selected for the program have played basketball and have had to juggle peer pressure, practice and games all while trying to keep academics up.

"This is a new program," she said, "and we mentors are tasked with encouraging and motivating the players to help them be successful while in school and outside of school and hopefully carry on into the future. They also mentor the players in grades below them.

"We do team building nights and just act as a 'big sis' when they need someone to talk to.

"As for being in law enforcement since 2006, I see what can happen to those who do not have a good support system or don't have the right person to guide them, and I feel if I could be that one positive person in their lives they look up to then I might be able to make a difference in the long run.

"My passion is to help others," says Henry, "and I was honored to be asked to participate in this program. It has already been successful and I see great things coming from this program."

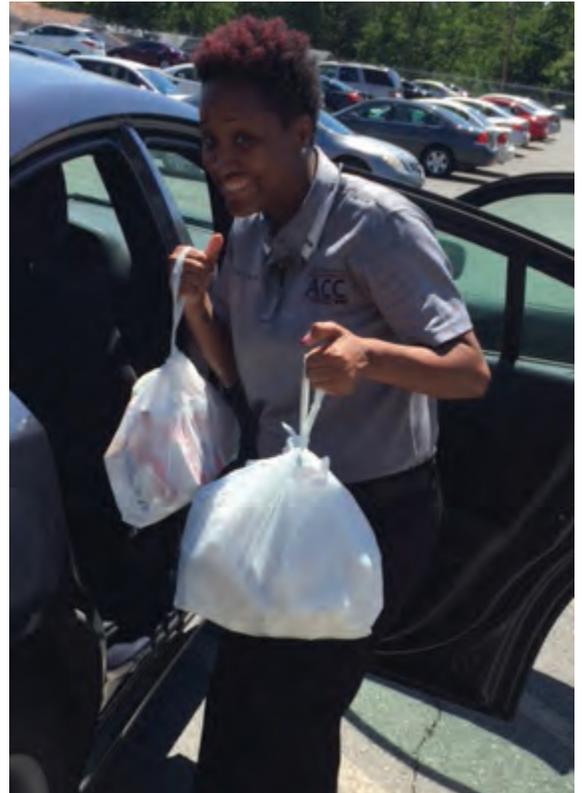
Area 5 sees impact on children



Becky Nichols and Paula Cox of Area 5 attended a three-hour Policy Café in Russellville which included round table discussions of policy sponsored by the Arkansas Advocates for children and Families. Presentations from the No Kid hungry program and after school/summer programs, Behavioral Health Services and DHS/ Child welfare was the focus of the discussions. We see the effect of unresolved family issues in our offender population.

Areas 7 and 8 reach out to those in need

Members of CAPP, Area 7 and Area 8, got together to give care packages to homeless men and women and those in need. All donations were made by staff with Area 7, Area 8, Parole Board, Central Arkansas Parole/Probation Association (CAPP) and others. These photos depict the unity of the area offices and organization as Care packages were delivered by AAM Jania Evans, AAM Rosia Cain, Agents Kizmet Johnson and Kristie Baker, and Officer LaKieva Meadows. Areas that were served were Our House, underneath the Broadway Bridge, the Compassion Center, the Train Station, River City Homeless Daycare, and the Albert Pike Building. The people were so grateful and appreciative of the donations they were blessed with receiving. The photos also show the joy ACC staff experienced in helping those who need help. More photos on page 18.



Areas 7 and 8 reach out to those in need



Two Care packages were given to each person. One with the necessity items and the other one held a little snack. Socks, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, mouth wash, deodorant, body wash, shampoo/conditioner, sanitizer, baby wipes, first aid kit, lip chap, sanitary napkins for the females, and powder for females were some of the necessities given. For a snack, they were given chips, a bottle of water, snack crackers, and granola bars.



Northeast Center celebrates recovery

September was National Celebrate Recovery month. In support of Celebrate Recovery, the Northeast Arkansas Community Correction Center in Osceola had a special guest speaker every Friday to talk to residents.



In the photograph at left is Maurice Carthon, a local graduate who played for the New York Giants and won two super bowl rings and went on to coach for the Cleveland Browns. From left to right is Carthon; Flossie Lane, NEC Treatment Supervisor; and Zachary Logan, a former resident of NEC who has gone on to live a successful life. In the photograph at right is a local recovering alcoholic and member of AA/NA speaking to residents.



Wrestle for Recovery also made a special appearance. Wrestle for Recovery features local wrestlers who came out and spoke to residents about living a clean and sober life and the benefits of doing what's right. They also give an exhibition that was enjoyed by residents and staff alike. ACC Officer Patrick Washington was challenged to a match by one of the wrestlers - don't worry Washington didn't hurt him.

Jackson County Drug Court holds graduation



The Jackson County Drug Court Program celebrated the graduation of five participants in November. The First Assembly of God in Newport sponsored the graduation with a reception that followed at the Newport office. Pictured are: (from left to right) graduates Courtney Colburn and James Colburn, Drug Court Counselor Ashley Hanan, PPA Mike Jones, graduate Jason Joslin, Drug Court Admin. Cathy Jeffery, Circuit Judge Harold Erwin and graduate Bryce Lee.

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positions ranging from
Correctional Officer to Counselor to
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ACC, go to:
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Saline County Drug Court empowers people

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a hamburger and hot dog cook-out and presented each player who had participated in the softball games with a participation trophy.

The players again put their money together and presented each of their sponsors with a framed team picture, personalized plaque and thank you card signed by each team member.

Our drug court participants had heard of a kickball tournament that was being held on October 30 for Back the Blue with the proceeds going to benefit an after-school program in Benton, and they wanted to be a part of that, too. So once again, they pooled their money and took part in something that would benefit their community.

About mid-October we started planning for a Holiday meal for the participants and their families and reached out to the community for a place to hold this event. Holland Chapel Church was willing to allow us to hold our event there free of charge. They also provided some of the food and supplies for it.

We had designated six participants to head the committees for set up, decorations, donations, meal planning, activities and clean up and they were instructed to recruit five other participants to help them on their committee.

All of these committees worked meticulously together to put together an awesome gathering and fellowship. The decorations committee made each of the table



An Olaf piñata delighted the children who attended a Drug Court luncheon.

centerpieces and reached into their own pocket for most of the cost and utilized their creativity to make some awesome centerpieces.

The activity committee bought three piñatas that were appropriate for children ages 2-18 and filled each of them with candy. Each child was able to hit the piñata and join in on the fun. There was also a bean bag game set up for the children to play with and some played with their parents as well as having a pin the nose on the snowman game. The organization that we wanted to help through this activity was Arkansas Children's Hospital as several of our clients have had

family or children there. They wanted to ensure that each child would have a present on Christmas morning so they each brought one new toy for our toy drive.

On Saturday, December 10, our day began with the meal with our participants past and present, their families and community members. We had two guest speakers who shared their story of recovery and some of the struggles that they had faced along the way, how they had overcome them, and what they are doing today in order to keep helping others.

We then had all of the children

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Saline County Drug Court empowers people

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from ages 2-18 hitting the piñatas and chasing the candy as it hit the ground. The piñatas were of Olaf from Frozen, Frozen princess and Minion. To hear the children's laughter and the smiles from the parents was definitely a Kodak moment. We also had an anonymous donor that had donated toys so that each child could receive a toy, so the children were all given a candy cane with a number attached to it and

when that number was called, the child, along with their parent was allowed to select an age-appropriate gift.

All remaining toys were then donated to the Arkansas Children's Hospital. Through generous donations from David's Burgers, Kroger, Waffle House, Harp's, Renewal House, Gary's Sling Blade and various individuals in the community, we were able to have door prize drawings where individuals were presented with gift certificates, grocery certificates, holiday decorations and other miscellaneous items as well as assisting our decorations committee with some of their decorations. Before the day was over, all of the participants were talking



about next year's party and wanting to be involved in the planning and organization of it.

I am honored to work with this Drug Court team because they realize that treatment is a big part of the offender being successful and that we have to assist each participant to find their strengths and positive things to do with their time.

We also are there to help them improve their weaknesses and to continue reaching to do better in their lives.

The work of Drug Court is important and it takes the partnership of ACC staff and offenders to work.

We are there to encourage them and cheer them on while instilling

in them structure and commitment to something they believe in and for them to be held accountable for their decisions and actions.

All of our participants are high-risk and high-needs and through positive encouragement from each member of the team, they are learning that they can do things that are worthwhile and they can turn their lives around and live a healthy productive life.

At Saline County Drug Court, we have treatment that is tailored to fit each individual and understand that the same things don't work for everyone. I am glad to say we are not a cookie cutter Drug Court and am proud of each of our participants.