

2013
Virginia Juvenile Justice Association
Meritorious Award in the Area of Residential Services
LARRY DRIVER

Our recipient in the area of Residential Services is employed in secure detention. In that role he is said to be tireless in his efforts, dedication and commitment to the success of at-risk youth in his community and has made significant impact on the young people committed to the Newport News Department of Juvenile Services. This is particularly true for the young people selected for participation in the musical group, the Post-D Melody Makers”.

Originally employed by the Newport News Public Schools as a guitar teacher, in 2003 our recipient brought musical talent and a strong desire to be a positive influence on youth and joined the Newport News Juvenile Services as a Secure Detention Specialist. With a desire to give kids in his care something more tangible than structure, discipline and mentorship, in 2004 with two water damaged keyboards, one snare drum and two very excited kids, our recipient formed the “Post-D Melody Makers”. His goal and vision for the Melody Makers was to foster positive and productive behaviors through music therapy. Within months, “Dr. Jam” and his Melody Makers began performing at various local GED graduation ceremonies and functions sponsored by the Newport News Juvenile Services. It did not take long before the parents of the kids in the Melody Makers, the placing judge, the probation officers and all other involved began to see the positive impact that the music was having. They saw both an impact on behavior and outlook on life.

In the nine years since Dr. Jam formed the Melody Makers, more than 180 juvenile have participated. The group has performed for Governor Tim Kaine, two mayors, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the police department, numerous charitable events and ... the VJJA Fall Institute. The Melody Makers have learned and played more than 100 different songs and recorded two music CDs. In June of this year the group reached the milestone of performing at their 100th performance.

Our recipient is said to have an unparalleled work ethic, to be passionate and to display a positive attitude. His passion is said to put his whole heart into his music classes. He is also said to be committed to carving out time for kids for performance practice. And it should be noted that everything he does for the Melody Makers group is over and above his regularly assigned responsibilities as a Detention Specialist.

Please join me in congratulating this year’s winner of VJJA’s 2013 Meritorious Award in the Area of Residential Services LARRY DRIVER.