

Inside YCS

A NEWSLETTER
BY AND FOR ALL YCS EMPLOYEES



VOLUME 29 | January 2026

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INSIDE YCS

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Christopher O'Bryant



Embracing All the Possibilities®

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**PLEASE TAKE OUR 2 MINUTE NEWSLETTER SURVEY
BY FEBRUARY 18. THANK YOU!**



<https://forms.office.com/r/PbjrFzL5Xc>

President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

I want to begin by thanking our residential staff, our facilities team and SRT teams who braved the recent snowstorm and worked double shifts to ensure the participants in our homes remained safe and supported. While the year may have started in a deep freeze across the state, it certainly did not freeze our commitment to our mission.

One of the most exciting updates this month is the successful relocation of most of our administrative offices to one central location. Our incredible Infrastructure & Facilities team — along with many other staff members — pushed through weather challenges, construction delays, and city inspections to move our Hackensack and East Orange offices into our beautiful new space in West Orange by mid-January. That level of teamwork and perseverance is what makes YCS special.

Our new Boland Drive location is now home to Human Resources, Training, the Foundation, Communications, Nursing, IMS, SRT, and several Executive team members. I hope many of you will have the opportunity to visit for training, meetings, or consultations with HR.

While the new office suite reflects the professional and dignified workplace we strive to create, our environment is about more than walls and furniture. The way we treat one another — and the care we show our participants — truly defines our culture.

In this issue of Inside YCS, you will see several shout-outs from across the agency. It is inspiring to see managers and frontline staff recognizing one another's efforts. Our employee spotlight highlights Chris O'Bryant, a cook and kitchen manager, who went the extra mile to ensure a child with multiple dietary restrictions felt included at mealtimes. We might never have known about this thoughtful act if a program manager had not shared the story with Communications. These are the moments that reflect who we are.

Looking ahead, CARF will conduct its triennial survey in April. The outcome impacts both our accreditation and state funding, so please continue working closely with the QAPI team and your leaders to ensure all action items and improvements are complete. Then in May, we will gather to celebrate the creativity and talent of our children at the Blossoms Art Exhibition and Awards Show — one of the highlights of our year.

Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and teamwork. I am grateful to work alongside each of you.

With appreciation,

Tara



Tara Augustine

Welcome New Employees

New Employees and Interns who completed 90 days by January 27, 2026

Doe, Felix Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Phoenix	Hall Jr., Robert A. Personal Assistant DDD-Blackwood	LaBarbera, Roberta Clinician DCF-IRTS Kilbarchan	Rosencranz, Julianna Nurse RN HealthSvc- ResidentNurse-S	Tann, Dachechia Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Fisher Hall
Dossous, Naderge Intern - UnPaid DCF-PCH IDD Sawtelle Hall	Herald, Urshala D. Residential Assistant DCF-RTC Holley	Loor Gomez, Shirley P. Teacher Aide DOE-George Washington	Scott, Randa Teacher Aide DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr	Thomas, Shamoneke D. Personal Assistant DDD-Greenbrook
Doyle, John Clinician DCF-PCH Fisher Hall	Hutchinson III, Berkeley E. Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Laurie Haven	McCain, Takeyah Residential Assistant DCF-PCH Fisher Hall	Seguin, Julie Nurse RN HealthSvc- ResidentNurse-N	Wilkins, Alton Cook Food Services
Floyd, Michelle Personal Assistant DDD-Buena Vista	Kopack, Kathryn M. Reading Specialist DOE-George Washington	Roberts, Nadia Personal Assistant DDD-Pearl	Skripak, JoAnna Physical Therapist DOE-Sawtelle Learning Ctr	

Gordon Family Trust Employee Scholarship

Scholarship Recipient Shares his experience and gratitude

Christian Herbert, a teacher aide at Sawtelle Learning Center and recipient of the Gordon Family Scholarship, has applied the grant towards coursework in the Master's Program in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. Herbert explains how this opportunity has helped him further his career dream to work with children affected by autism.

Through his coursework, Herbert is gaining a strong foundation in ABA concepts that directly connect to his day-to-day work at Sawtelle. "Being able to understand and apply behavioral principles in real time has made a significant difference in

how I approach student behaviors. Concepts that once felt abstract are now much clearer, and this deeper understanding has helped me de-escalate behaviors more effectively and respond with greater confidence and intention. Overall, my coursework has greatly strengthened my practical skills and professional growth."

In a message to the Gordon Family Herbert wrote

I would like to sincerely thank the Gordon Trust donors for providing this opportunity and for helping ease the financial stress of pursuing graduate education. Your support allows me to remain focused on my studies and professional development. I look forward to completing my master's program and becoming a BCBA at YCS Sawtelle so that I can continue supporting our students on a higher level and make an even greater impact.



[To apply for a scholarship, click here.](#)

Promotions

Congratulations!!!

*Your dedication and hard work have truly paid off.
Wishing you all the best in this new chapter of your career at YCG.*



Captain, Lissa, VP Program Operations, Regional Admin - 5500

Woodyard, Jasmine S., Program Director, DCF-PCH Bright Start



Employee Snapshot



Sheri Brown

HR Generalist, in her office in our new West Orange Administrative Suite

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ✦ **Aminah Clark** – is a very dedicated employee; she is very flexible and takes initiative to make contributions.
- ✦ **April Wright** – is a dedicated and caring worker at Pinewood! She is doing a great job as a leader in her new role as 7–3 Supervisor. Great work April!
- ✦ **Brit'tany Works** – is such an incredible advocate at Woodhaven as Program Director. As one of the Woodhaven employees, I feel lucky to work alongside such a strong leader. We are grateful for you!
- ✦ **Christinia Bell** – thank you for coming to Pinewood Valley's staff meeting and providing ECR training for our staff! We so appreciate her going out of her way to attend in person and provide support to our staff. Thank you, Christinia!
- ✦ **Chyanna Matthew**, Bright Start Clinician – thank you for a job well done providing clinical services to the youth and being that listening ear.
- ✦ **Erykah Baker** – recently joined Haddon full-time and has done an amazing job working with the girls at the program and keeping them calm through the chaos!
- ✦ **Generia Burgess** – did a great job running room 209! She is creative, patient, and kind with the students and always willing to step in and help. Her dedication and genuine care for the students truly stands out.
- ✦ **Haddon Staff** – thank you for navigating the hotel stay, client problems, parent problems, and responding in ways that were so amazing. Nobody flinched; no one complained—everyone worked together to make our brief relocation, and the girls stay successful.
- ✦ **Harry Hyman** – thank you for being kind, patient, and for always having a positive attitude! You're a ray of sunshine, and Sawtelle is lucky to have you as an employee.
- ✦ **Imany Herald** – is always going the extra mile. She makes sure to support fellow coworkers in the classroom and challenges herself to come up with student-driven activities based on student levels. She goes above and beyond!

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ✦ **Jasmine Woodard** – congratulations on your promotion to Bright Start PD.
- ✦ **Jennifer Wade**, Nurse – thank you for going above and beyond. On behalf of the Northern Region team, we appreciate all you do.
- ✦ **Jessica Quinones** – has done an amazing job since joining the Haddon team with getting their group numbers up and for all the help she gave during a difficult time.
- ✦ **Jessica Waters** – is such a dedicated member of the Woodhaven team! We are so grateful for her help at the program and care for the youth.
- ✦ **Julianna Rosencranz** – thanks for all that you do! Julianna hops from site to site as an incredible program nurse, providing care across the state. Vineland, Whispering Mills, Ironcrest, and Pinewood are so lucky to have you as their nurse!
- ✦ **Karen Crammer** – thanks for being so helpful with medications during a brief relocation of the Haddon program. She assisted and organized everything the program needed.
- ✦ **Karen Metzger** – every time I see her, she interacts with the clients in such a positive and uplifting manner. You are truly appreciated.
- ✦ **Katherine Gutierrez** – for being a team player at Bright Start! She always shows up, never complains, and has a great rapport with the youth. Ms. Kat, we appreciate you!
- ✦ **Katie Forsythe** – shows great leadership in class, is able and willing to collaborate with staff, and brings out the best in the whole room.
- ✦ **Kimberley Zisa** – always goes above and beyond her core responsibilities, ensuring that every student has the extra support and guidance they need to succeed.
- ✦ **Latrica Caldwell** – for always being willing to help out at Haddon. She listens to and supports the girls with any issues they may have.
- ✦ **Leidy Gomez**, House Manager at Morris – thank you for taking the time to care for her individual who had surgery. She was there before and after surgery. Great job, Leidy—we appreciate you.

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ✦ **Marquita Hawkins** (Ms. Kee) – has done an amazing job working with the girls at Haddon. She is a strong advocate and was a huge help during a difficult period at the home.
- ✦ **Marsha Armstrong** – is always taking the initiative and helping out in any way she can. She is supportive not only to her program, but to other directors as well. Keep up the good work!
- ✦ **Matthew Hopkins** – has been quickly and thoroughly responsive to all privacy requests as the new YCS Privacy Officer.
- ✦ **Paul Albright**, Phoenix Shift Supervisor – thank you for being the ultimate team player. Reliable, always willing to step in, and consistently goes above and beyond.
- ✦ **Phil Ledig** – is doing an awesome job as clinician at Pinewood! Always prompt and efficient, Phil has exceeded 100% compliance in his contractual outcomes since his first month. Pinewood staff is grateful for such a hands-on, caring, team-player clinician dedicated to the youth. We are so impressed and proud of your hard work!
- ✦ **Randa Scott** – is positive energy! She is always engaged and works very well with her students.
- ✦ **Sanaya Freeman** – is a great addition to the team. She is very helpful and kind.
- ✦ **Savannah Spann** – is down to earth, attentive, and shows strong potential for leadership through her critical thinking and compassion.
- ✦ **Senica Rogers, Andrew Beckford, Aaron Clark, and Raphael Lee** –thanks for braving the snowstorm to pick up employees and drive them to their shifts.
- ✦ **Shanaya Battle & Bruce Thompson** – thank you for working overtime during the snowstorm and for your continued dedication to the youth at Vineland.
- ✦ **Shantel Frances** – is very flexible and always positive with the students. You can always count on Shantel!
- ✦ **Sharlene Mattie & Alicia Brown** – thanks for being extremely helpful in picking up open shifts at Vineland. Thank you!

Shoutouts

To All Our Amazing Employees!

- ✦ **SRT Teams** – North and South – thank you for working double shifts and more during the storm to cover homes that were short staffed.
- ✦ **Tamar Hampton and Brit'tany Works** for assisting with coverage during the snowstorm at their programs, coming in to support their staff on their weekend off! We value your dedication and emphasis on the safety of your youth and staff!
- ✦ **Tyrone Bagley, Larry Bernard, James Magazine, and Andrew Beckford** –thanks for all your help with the Foundation's move to West Orange and holiday gift transport, loading, and unloading.
- ✦ **Tyriq Rease** – thank you for your punctuality, great documentation, and for setting an excellent example for the youth at Vineland.
- ✦ **Uzomaka Njoku and the entire Walnut Staff** – thanks for taking care of Harold Hahn until his passing. He was treated like family. Amaka, your dedication has not gone unnoticed.

Clinical Rounds

Clinical Case Presentation March 5 In person DCF Training Facility New Brunswick, NJ	Facilitated by Leslie Lester, Psy.D , this presentation highlights real-world clinical challenges and evidence-informed approaches.
Reactive Attachment Disorder April 2 Virtual	Facilitated by Michelle Robbins, LCSW CEUS are available

Work Anniversaries

Congratulations!

YEARS	Name	YEARS	Name
37	Brown, Boswell	9	Harvey Jr., Darrell
29	Guevara, America	8	Drain-Mantez, Shameya L.
28	Dolan, Kim	8	Omini, Alice
26	Taylor, Anita	8	Pierce, Clarence W.
26	Ashford, Larry	8	Takyi, Sarah
25	Harrison, Rashida	8	Walker, Jonquea S.
24	White, Randell	7	Garrett, Tiahjhna
21	Hopkins, Matthew	7	Gurovich, Nicole
20	Henderson, Jerry	7	Harris, Tina M.
15	Thomas, Tamacsha A.	7	Blevins Jr., Butler M.
15	Gayle, Federick S.	7	Treanor, Alexis A.
15	Burno, Frank D.	6	Casado, Francia
14	Ouhdou, Driss	6	Lawrence, Aiyona
14	Enrico, Dosty	5	Lampkin, Keyonnah
13	Campbell, Monica T.	5	Rothmiller, Mia C.
13	Hart, Lawrence A.	4	Atkins, Dawn
13	Lee, Raphael	4	Delmonte, Erick A.
12	Baker, Ayana	4	Newmark, Edward
12	Bertino, Christopher	3	Bockowski Ph.D., Frank C.
12	Charles, Jhim	3	Albright, Paul
10	Bender, Dane	3	Foster, Kayla
10	Mattie, Sharlene	3	Bowers, Shakeerah P.
10	Rease Sr., Malcom L.	3	Brown, Clifton
9	Eutsey, Myesha M.	3	Codiot, Guerdine



Work Anniversaries



Congratulations!

YEARS	Name	YEARS	Name
3	Stott, Thomas	1	Atkinson, Anita
3	Galetta, Inna	1	Goff, Ja'Keia A.
3	Diaz, Lisa	1	Allen, JahQueena
3	Maceia, Felisberto	1	Coleman, Kaijah
3	Peeples, Tiffany	1	Echevarria, Maya
2	Daniels, Yakima C.	1	Gerardino, Edward
2	Downey, Yazming	1	Rease Sr., Tyriq B.
2	Muckle, Za'meir	1	Watson, Dyheim
2	Ragland, Dawn	1	Friedrich, Andrew E.
2	Bright, Chanelle D.		
2	George, Tajon		
2	Hall, Jaquai		
2	Boston, Dior		
2	Cavalcante, Zachary		
2	Russell, Cardett E.		
1	Aguilar, Angela G.		
1	LoSardo, Sofia M.		
1	McKinnon, Adayshia B.		
1	Menjivar, Annette		
1	Nicol, Estherline J.		
1	Ortiz, Kiara		
1	Smith, Geneva A.		
1	Thomas III, Ronald E.		
1	James, Deborah A.		
1	Salvary, Eric		

Milestones



Professional Accomplishments



We'd like to congratulate **Dr. Leslie Lester**, Associate Director of the YCS Institute & The Helen May Strauss Clinics on receiving her Certification as a PCIT (Parent-Child Interaction Therapy) therapist.

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an evidence-based treatment for young children with behavioral and emotional difficulties that focuses on strengthening the parent-child relationship. Through live coaching, parents learn effective skills to improve their child's behavior, emotional regulation, and overall family functioning.



Birth Announcement



Carmelina Paul, Training department, gave birth to a baby girl, Micaëla Grace on March 7, 2025.

Chaplain's Message

YCS Chaplain William Waller

I would like to remind all my fellow colleagues that you can join us in our corporate prayer call every Tuesday at noon. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are confronting issues either for yourself or those of a client that could benefit from spiritual support or guidance. All calls or emails are confidential. Please reach out to me at chaplain@ycs.org or 973-9851422. I am here to assist any one in our YCS Family in whatever way I can. Peace and Blessings to all.

Condolences

Remembering Harold Hahn

September 2, 1962 - January 19, 2026

Walnut Home



Harold Hahn was more than a resident in our care—he was family. He had a presence that filled Walnut House in ways that words can hardly capture. Harold taught us patience, compassion, and what it truly means to show up for someone, even on the hardest days. His journey was not always easy, but through it all, he remained deeply loved and fiercely protected by those around him.

Every smile, every familiar routine, every small victory mattered with Harold. He reminded us that progress is not always loud or visible—it often lives in quiet moments, gentle care, and unwavering commitment. Caring for Harold was an honor, and his life left an imprint on our hearts that will never fade.

Harold will be remembered for the way he brought us together as a team, for the lessons he taught us without ever needing to speak them, and for the love he inspired in everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. Though he is no longer with us, his spirit will always remain a part of the Walnut House and the YCS community.

Rest peacefully, Harold. You were cherished, you were protected, and you will always be remembered.

Thank you,
Amaka Njoku, Walnut House Manager

Harold will be greatly missed. It was an honor for us to be a part of his journey. We knew Harold as our participant of a little over 3.5 years, but listening to the priest, at the funeral service, who was Harold's spiritual guide for so many years, it was enlightening how much he impacted so many lives. He was faithful to his local parish attending every mass he could, always seated in the back row.

Harold was the owner and operator of H & H landscaping services. His brother-in-law spoke about his daughter, Harold's niece, and her fondest memory of typing his landscaping invoices.

Priest Jim noted that Harold was a great landscaper. Harold planted a bed of junipers years ago that are still blooming, which is a testament to his work. Additionally, Harold had a heart of service often taking care of his elderly neighbors landscaping at no cost and picking up their groceries for them when needed. He also had a great passion for cars which included a Chevy truck, a drop top Trans Am, and his beloved Porsche. Harold will be missed and his memory will forever be in our hearts.

Rayletta Garrison, SVP of Operations

Employee Spotlight

Christopher O'Bryant Brings Creativity & Inclusion to YCS Dinner Tables



During the Christmas holiday, a group of children from the Holley Center went on an outing. All the children were excited — but for one girl, the experience would usually mean watching everyone else enjoy pizza while she ate a “special” packed meal.

Christopher O'Bryant, a YCS cook, didn't want that to happen. Knowing her dietary restrictions, he prepared a mock “pizza” made from a carefully flattened chicken breast, topped with sauce and cheese. For Renee, 12, who has strict dietary limitations due to a chronic health condition, the thoughtful gesture made all the difference.

“Chris has been doing a wonderful job of giving Renee food alternatives and making them look and taste good,” says Ebenezer Abuchi, Holley PD.

Since joining YCS nearly nine months ago as kitchen manager for the Newark, Holley, and Kilbarchan campuses, Chris noticed that many children often declined the prepared meals, opting instead for PB&J or turkey sandwiches.



Anna Taylor & Skylynn Saez with Chris

To change that, Chris began introducing new recipes and hosting tasting events at the programs. “They tell me what they like and make suggestions for changes,” he explains. “It gives the kids a chance to plan the meals with me.”

“Chris has been making diligent efforts to ensure the food our youth eat is meaningful and colorful,” Abuchi adds. As a result, children are enjoying more balanced meals — and Chris finds great satisfaction in watching them enjoy what he prepares.

With nearly 30 years of experience as a cook, this is Chris's first role focused on preparing meals for children and teens. “Any success I've had comes from the support and feedback I've received from my colleagues at the campuses and the kids,” he says. He also expresses gratitude to Carlos Acosta, Kitchen Director, “for giving me the freedom to explore different options when preparing meals and always being there to offer guidance when I need it.”

Employee Spotlight

When I first interviewed Chris for the job of kitchen manager, his strong background in corporate kitchens immediately stood out to me. Now at YCS, Chris consistently delivers quality meals to be distributed to participants across three kitchen campuses.

He goes above and beyond to ensure that participants with special dietary needs receive well-balanced meals. Chris also brings out the best in the cooks and makes sure they have all the necessary ingredients to successfully execute the menus.

Despite the many hurdles we face in the food department, Chris, along with the rest of the kitchen staff, is doing an excellent job.

Carlos Acosta
Director of Food Services -



Carlos Acosta with Chris

I would like to acknowledge **Fabiana Cabrera and Bionca Acosta**, the cooks for GW School and the Sawtelle Learning Center, for doing an incredible job. I've received very positive feedback from the principals and students at both schools.

~Carlos Acosta
Director of Food Services

Intern Corner

Samantha Vassallo **MSW Intern at George Washington School** **From Fordham University**



Did you have any expectations when you started interning at GW School ?

I began interning at this school in September '25. Going into the experience, I did not have many expectations, as this was my first time interning and my first experience working with children in an out-of-district, behavioral school. Although I was unsure of what to expect, I was excited to work with this new population and eager to learn from the experience.

What are your main responsibilities as an intern?

My main responsibilities as an intern include managing my own caseload, supervising unstructured activities such as lunch and gym, and attending supervision, social work meetings, and other staff meetings. In addition, I plan and teach social-emotional learning lessons for classroom groups.

How do you feel you have grown both personally and professionally from your experience working with the students and faculty at GW?

Professionally, I have gained a deeper understanding of how to collaborate with a multidisciplinary team during regular supervision and staff meetings. I have also developed a stronger understanding of how systemic factors such as poverty, trauma, and limited resources can impact students' behaviors and emotional regulation.

Personally, this experience has increased my cultural humility and self-awareness, pushing me to reflect on my own assumptions and adapt my approach to meet students where they are.

Overall, I have grown by connecting with these students and building trusting relationships with them. Being able to support them, see their strengths, and earn their trust has helped me develop patience, empathy, and confidence in my role as an intern.

Intern Corner

What has been one of your greatest challenges/successes on the job?

One challenge at this internship has been working with students who present significant behavioral needs, particularly during unstructured times such as lunch and gym. These moments can be unpredictable and require quick decision-making, consistency, and emotional regulation. With that being said, my greatest success has been building meaningful connections with such amazing students and recognizing the incredible potential they each have in life.

How have you been supported by your direct supervisor and other faculty?

I have been supported and guided by my supervisor both directly during supervision and on a day-to-day basis with my caseload and any questions that arise. I have also felt supported by the rest of the social work team and the entire school staff, who are welcoming, collaborative, and deeply committed to supporting the students.

Do you feel this internship is preparing you for your future career goals?

Yes, this internship is preparing me for my future goals. I would love to work in the school system with adolescents, and this experience has given me valuable skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of supporting students with diverse needs as well as a better understanding of the educational system and children's system of care.

Samantha is an integral part of the GW Clinical team. She has her own caseload of students, provides weekly individual and family counseling sessions, and engages with the entire faculty to apply a multidisciplinary approach to individual student's treatment.

By consistently going above and beyond her internship tasks, she motivates and encourages students while remaining sensitive to their emotional and social needs.

Samantha is a proactive self-starter who upon graduation will be a tremendous asset to the field of social work - especially to a clinical team dedicated to client centered care.

Sue Heguy, LCSW

Director of Student Services & Professional Development
Clinical Supervisor, Holley Center

Clinical Focus

Caring for the needs of clients and ourselves as clinicians during difficult times

From a psychologist's lens,
Dr. Leslie A. Lester, PsyD IMH-E
Associate Director,
YCS Institute & Helen May Strauss Clinics



As clinicians, we approach our work with families with humility, meeting them where they are in order to understand their needs and support them through profoundly challenging circumstances. When working with clients facing immigration-related concerns, we carefully assess what support is most helpful in each moment. For some, this may involve sitting with them in their fear or grief—particularly around uncertainty or the potential separation from loved ones. For others, it may mean providing practical guidance, such as preparing for interactions with ICE or developing a care plan for their children in the event of deportation.

We remain mindful that these conversations can evoke intense emotional responses, including fear, insecurity, loss of control, and distress. Such reactions may also be compounded by past traumatic experiences, making the present situation more difficult to navigate. In these moments, our role is to validate clients' experiences, support emotional regulation, and help them organize their thoughts and feelings. We also acknowledge how current stressors can activate earlier trauma, and we work collaboratively with clients to strengthen their ability to cope. Being present with clients through these difficult moments is central to our work, and we allow their needs and perspectives to guide how we provide support.

These situations can also evoke strong emotional responses for us as helping professionals. It is essential that we remain aware of our own reactions and consider whether they stem from our personal experiences, the client's experiences, or a combination of both. Clinical decisions must always remain grounded in the best interests of our clients. This is particularly important when our own life experiences parallel those of the individuals we serve, as such an overlap can challenge our ability to maintain professional boundaries. Attending to our own well-being is therefore a critical responsibility. This may include seeking consultation from colleagues, engaging in supervision, or participating in activities that replenish our emotional resources. If we are to pour into others' emotional cups, it is our responsibility to ensure that we have the capacity to give.

Approximately 25 clinicians at the YCS Dr. Helen May Strauss Clinics in East Orange and Union City provide individual and family therapy to over 190 children and adults in Essex and Hudson counties every month.



Happy Birthday!!



January Birthdays

Aaron Grant	Dashana Cooper	Jean E. Toussaint	Marcus J. Turner	Robert Stephan	Tashanna Sutherland
Alaya S. Lott	Dayzon T. Bean I	Jennesis J. Quintana	Melonie Landers	Ronald C. Gentry	Taylor Healey
Albert J. Gregoire	Deborah A. James	Jennifer J. Wade	Melvina L. Brown	Roshard Rima	Teyanna DeCando
Alif James	Devin Davis	Jessica L Smith	Mia C. Rothmiller	Ryan Hill	Timothy L. Jordan
Alkhalig Royal	Donna Sutton	Joseph Ciapanna Jr.	Michele A. DiFilippo	Sean Lewis	Tony S. Williams
Andrea Dominguez	Dwayne L. Sheppard	Judith Halsey	Michelle Floyd	Seanta Cherry	Tonya Patillo
Berkeley E. Hutchinson III	Elizabeth Torres Santiago	Kallisha Moore	Michelle Williamson	Shalisa Pryor	Willie White
Brian M. Zapata	Emmanuel Omini	Kareem Absolu	Moise Etienne	Shaquana L. McClendon	Willy Del Orbe
Chartel D. Bush	Eric Spearman	Karen M. Crammer	Morris L. Mckenzie	Sharazan M. Chambers Philippe	Wuya S. Amara
Chase Castillo	Eron Havard	Keasha Matthews	Nailah Mayo	Sharonda West	Yamil Hunter
Cheri Smith	Estefania Bermeo Paredes	Kenette Johnson	Nalesha D. Reed	Shawn Lee	
ChoDayah Davis	Gabriel Ridore	Kennily Rodriguez	Natayia D. McCray	Sheena Dunlap	
Christelle McClure	Gay Williams	Kevon Reynolds	Octavia E. Green	Shelinda Williams	
Christina Gilmore	Gloria Ross	Khalah Friday	Onassha Rogers	Shydai I. Hannibal	
Christine Petrick	Guerdine Codiot	Kiara Ortiz	Onjah M. Owens	Sterling A. Wilson	
Claire Regel	Henrietta Hemingway	Kristen Grossman	Osei K. Boateng	Susan Eck-Jones	
Colleen Sewell	Herbert Bell III	Lara Kincannon	Owen A. Barnes Jr.	Susannah Heguy	
Dachemia Tann	Ivette DeLaCruz	Laura DelTufo	Pauline Lewis	Sylvia Mosley	
Danielle Adams	Jacqueder Pierre	Lisney Vargas	Pia Anjelica P. Ababon	Taina Montalvo	
Danielle Klein	James Dorante	Lissette Rodriguez	Quiana Still	Tamar Hampton	
Danielle Vandunk	Jason Stewart	Lorraine Gehrig-Mullins	Rashad Lloyd	Tanasha Liggins	
Darris F. Drennon	Jay Rizzo	Malik Ingram	Regina Rodriguez	Tarsi Burke	

Highlights

Treatment Home Families Enjoy Fun Activities



During the holiday season, many of our children had the opportunity to experience their first or second vacation while staying with YCS Treatment Home Parents. These special moments allowed our youth to create lasting memories, explore new environments, and enjoy meaningful family experiences outside of their daily routines.

One family took their youth on an unforgettable seven-day cruise, offering the opportunity to travel, relax, and experience new adventures. Another family embraced the winter season by taking their youth snow tubing in the Poconos, where they enjoyed the excitement of the outdoors and quality family time together.

These experiences highlight the dedication and commitment of our Treatment Home Parents, who consistently go above and beyond to provide our children with opportunities for joy, connection, and personal growth, especially during the holiday season.

Tracie D. Bass, LCSW
AVP of YCS Specialized Treatment Homes Statewide

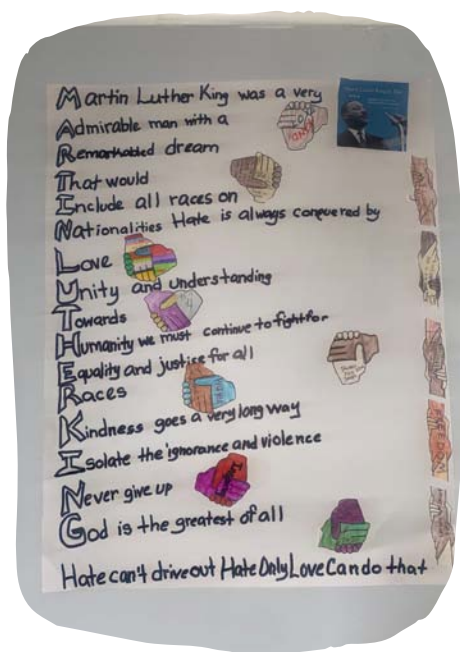
Highlights

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King



Prior to MLK Day, the girls at Whispering Mills, staff, and I prepared packages of food and our homemade chicken soup for homeless people in the local area. The youth felt good about serving a total of 35 people. We appreciate the support to teach the youth about kindness and gratitude. Additionally, on Monday, our youth prepped breakfast sandwiches and went to a local area where they identified a homeless family and also gave them a blessing bag of toiletries they made from dollar store items staff donated."

~ Submitted by **Marsha Armstrong**, Whispering Mills Program Director.



Children from Laurie Haven created a poster with encouraging messages to commemorate MLK Day.

~ Submitted by **Makeda Woodson**, Lawnridge Case Manager

Highlights

Nurses Staff Appreciation Party



Casey Burns and **Deanna DeStefano** hosted an in-person meeting/department party at the DCF training center in New Brunswick this past week. They gifted the nurses with goodie bags to show our appreciation. Here are some pictures they wanted to share for the newsletter.



Shona Little, Latoya Pope, Hannah Girard, Juan Carlos Fajardo, Jennifer Wade, Alexandra Dziubek, Shameya Drain-Mantez, Julianna Rosencranz, Casey Burns, Dr. Mason-Bell, Dr. Fran Feigel, Deanna DeStefano



Highlights

Phoenix and Bright Start Staff at Top Golf



The night was cold, but the fun and laughter brought all the warmth that was needed. On 01/30/26, the staff of Phoenix and Bright Start came together for a fun filled night at Top Golf. This was a token of appreciation for the care and commitment towards the youths served within these programs. Their dedication and efforts are truly appreciated!

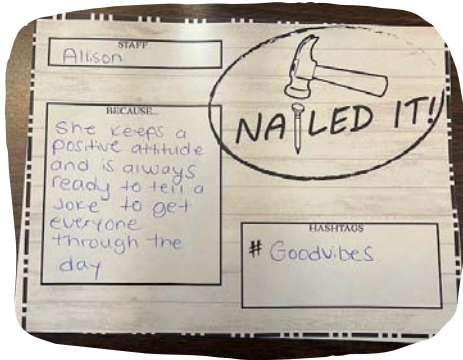
Sherene Bartley-Butler, LCSW
Regional Director DCF-Northern Region

Highlights

Sawtelle Learning Center's "Nailed It!" Board



Every month, the staff at the Sawtelle learning Center consistently shout out their coworkers every day on the "Nailed It!" board. This month's two "Nailed it" winners are **Onassha Rogers** and **Allison Wilmot**!



Onassha Rogers and Allison Wilmot



Sawtelle Learning Center's Winter Show



The holiday season continued into the new year at the Sawtelle Learning Center's Winter Show. Principal Caitlin Corlett introduced each classroom that performed a holiday song accompanied by guitarist Dana Salerno, music therapist, MA, MT-BC, for a packed house filled with their family members. It was a wonderful, festive event that everyone enjoyed.

Highlights

Southern Region Holiday Door Contest

1ST PLACE



Jessica Smith, SRT
"A Christmas Story"

2ND PLACE



Kamal Johnson
Maintenance Dept
"Cindy Lou & The Grinch"

3RD PLACE



Dyamond Divine,
Ashley Hill, Taina Montalvo
Intake/Behavioral Health
"A Nightmare Before Christmas"

Honorable Mention



Aja Wallace, QAPI
"Christmas Mantle"



Christina Bell
IMS Dept.



Jaime Fox
QAPI



Shamaime Williams
Thomas Johnson
HR Dept.



Bianca Dumas
DD Dept.

Agency Updates

NR Training Department has a New Address!

The Northern Region of the Training Department has a new address. Please be mindful when registering for in-person trainings.

If you are a Northern Region staff member, be sure to select training that lists the West Orange address as the location.

Be careful — you don't want to accidentally register for a Somerdale training!

All Northern Region in-person trainings will now be held at:



1 Boland Dr. West Orange, NJ 07018
2nd Floor – Suite 203

Parking



Please park in unmarked spaces only. There is plenty of parking available on the upper level of the lot. Vehicles parked in assigned spaces may be subject to towing.

Building Directions



Enter the building and locate the elevators on the main level. When you exit the elevator on the second floor, turn to your right. The office is located at the end of the hallway on the right.

We look forward to welcoming you into our new shared space. 😊

~ **Mike Baguidy**, VP of Training

NEW Training opportunities on the evenings and weekends

I'm pleased to share that starting this month (February), the Training Department will be offering evening and weekend Handle With Care (HWC) trainings on a monthly basis. This new schedule provides two additional training options, giving employees greater flexibility to select sessions that best fit their schedules. Trainings will be held at both our West Orange and Somerdale locations.

Please see the link below to register for a session.

February HWC Dates:

- Friday, February 20 – West Orange, 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM
- Saturday, February 28 – Somerdale, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Kindly ensure that your staff register for the training sessions that work best for them.

Agency Updates

QAPI's Audit Olympics

Congratulations!

YCS AUDIT OLYMPICS - 2nd Cycle 2025

Program/Residential Service

EOC

Adult IDD

GOLD	Absecon	97%
SILVER	Echo Hill	96%
BRONZE	Pamela	95%

GOLD	Emmans	100%
SILVER	Echo Hill	99%
BRONZE	Absecon	98%

Youth IDD

GOLD	Woodhaven	87.1%
SILVER	Lawn Ridge	86.6%
BRONZE	Sawtelle Hall	86%

GOLD	Camden	97%
SILVER	Woodhaven	96%
BRONZE	Estell Manor	95%

Behavioral Health

GOLD	Kilbarchan IRTS	97%
SILVER	Kilbarchan RTC-SPEC	96%
BRONZE	Sayre	95%

GOLD	Sayre	100%
SILVER	Phoenix	98%
BRONZE	Laurie Haven	95%

New from QAPI!

QAPI team is adding a monthly HIPAA Tip to the employee newsletter. Every month, QAPI will provide a key reminder for staff on some aspect of personal health information privacy and security.
~**Mathew Hopkins**, Data Analyst and Privacy Officer

January HIPAA Tip



How do we ensure private health information stays secure when emailing outside entities? YCS utilizes encryption. It's easy: start an email in Outlook and enter the word "encrypt" in the subject to instruct the Barracuda Email Encryption service to encrypt the message.

Managers Meeting Bulletin

January Manager Meeting Summary

Human Resources

All VPs have received their results from the Employee Engagement Survey and are actively developing action plans for their divisions. There are eight months to implement these plans. The goal is to take meaningful steps at the program level to address employee needs and improve engagement.

Infrastructure & Business Affairs

The Fleet Team is creating vehicle stickers with QR codes for OYCS vehicles. One QR code will be used for pre-trip inspections and another for post-trip inspections. All drivers are expected to comply with this policy and use the digital reporting format.

Finance

In December, the Finance Department reported a \$1 million positive financial outcome, reflecting the collective efforts to keep programs operating at full capacity.

A new mandatory training will be rolled out regarding updated procedures for reporting credit card purchases. All credit card reports must be submitted to APNR. For questions, contact Genney Blass or Misbah Rasool.

IMS

IMS has developed a new draft template to document DCF deliverables. The updated terminology is Staffing Standard Deliverables, and DCF has revised its requirements accordingly.

Regarding timecards, employees are expected to work seven hours per day. The lunch prompt has been removed, and lunch breaks are no longer monitored.

IT

There has been an increase in targeted phishing attempts. Do not open suspicious emails or unfamiliar attachments. Immediately forward any suspicious messages to the IT Department. Requests from third parties for personal or work identification should be considered a red flag.

Additionally, the agency has surpassed the 85% user adoption rate required to receive Microsoft 365 at no cost, exceeding the target by approximately 2.5%.

Managers Meeting Bulletin

January Manager Meeting Summary

Nursing

There has been an increase in medication errors, and incidents are not consistently being communicated or documented. Accurate tracking and reporting are critical to resolving these issues.

All nursing-related incidents must be entered individually into ECR. Recently, incidents were incorrectly grouped into a single report, which is not acceptable.

For infection control concerns, contact infectioncontrol@yycs.org promptly so appropriate communication and safety measures can be implemented.

IPPC will now deliver medications to programs on Sundays. Staff must check medications before the driver leaves and report any discrepancies immediately. If medication is not delivered and a participant misses a dose, the incident must be documented. Documentation must be consistent in MARS and Evolv.

Clinical

Families are an essential part of treatment planning and must be actively engaged. Family therapy is not optional unless otherwise ordered by the court. When parents require additional support beyond family therapy, a CMO may assist, and Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) is strongly encouraged. YCS clinics are also available for referrals and additional parent supports.

QAPI

To prevent fire hazards, dryer lint traps must be cleaned every time a dryer is used.

In 2025, there were 198 physical controls. The 2026 goal is a 10% reduction; however, this goal has already been exceeded early in the fiscal year. QAPI will follow up with programs that have a high frequency of incidents and will address discrepancies between reported incidents and physical control data.

CARF will be on site in April. It is essential that all policies are followed, including conducting fire drills on every shift and ensuring clients receive an annual copy of their rights.

Foundation

The Foundation actively seeks funding to address facility needs. While funding cannot be guaranteed, programs are encouraged to share their needs (e.g., bathmats, shower curtains). Requests can be sent to heart@yycs.org.

Communications

Each DCF program and school is asked to select a representative for the Blossoms Art Exhibit. Planning is underway for the exhibit, which will run for the entire month of May at BergenPAC.

For notes

For notes



Embracing All the Possibilities®