

March 2015 Supporting a Young Lady's Success

Last year I shared several success stories with you about young men who got their lives on the right path. This month, I would like to tell you about a young lady who was recently returned to the community.

Youth B served a total of 3 ½ years at DYS. She was served at the former Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility (SJCF), Montgomery County Center for Adolescent Services (CAS), and most recently Pomegranate, which put her closer to her 4-year-old son and great-grandmother. She explains, "Watching him grow up, from behind bars, has been hard. I should have been the one raising him."

In 2012, she passed her GED test on the first try. Shortly after, she enrolled in classes through our partnership with Ashland University. She currently has about 32 credit hours and is continuing to take classes while on parole.

In addition to educational progress, Youth B has made significant emotional headway. Therapists worked with her to work through trauma to overcome some of the stress and the anger that she had toward her mother, who was a co-defendant in the case that brought her to DYS. She explained that with help from behavioral health staff, she experienced a therapeutic visit with her mother, bringing healing for both of them.

Youth B participates in programming at Henkels & McCoy in Columbus. Through the program, she has already obtained a customer service certificate. She has a paid job at the site that is helping her develop administrative skills. In addition, the program is helping her obtain her driver's temporary permit.



Nan Hoff, DYS Administrator for Girls, checks in with Youth B at Henkels & McCoy

A variety of staff have supported Youth B during her journey. Thinking back to her stay at the former SJCF, she has fond memories of Miss Dumas (now retired): "She was there whenever I needed someone to talk to, and she would guide me. I liked when she would sing. I remember one time I was about to get into a fight with another girl, and she got me into my room and let me talk to her. I got everything out, and then I didn't need to fight."

While at CAS, staff supported youth B's relationships with her son by providing gas cards to the family to help with transportation costs associated with visiting.

Youth B's advice to other youth is this: "Take it one day at a time. Don't let anyone sidetrack you...I know where I'm going and how to get there."

Her plans for the future include finishing her college degree, getting her State Tested Nurse Aide (STNA), and eventually opening a child care business that specializes in caring for children who are sick. She also hopes to eventually get joint-custody of her son, now with a loving foster family, so that he can ease back into life with his mother.

Juvenile Parole Officer Frankie Tatum has worked with Youth B since she first arrived at DYS. "It's up to her how far she'll go. I plan to set her up with parenting classes and a mentor. I don't want her around negativity. She has a lot of go-get 'em! I just want to see her successful. That's what it's all about."

We all know that it takes a lot of work to help our youth making lasting change. As juvenile justice professionals, we can't do it alone. The ability to partner effectively with families, staff, volunteers, courts, and other organizations is absolutely essential to our mission of rehabilitating youth. Join me in celebrating the collaboration that has taken place to make a difference in Youth B's life.