



Volunteers for Youth Justice

a community caring for children in crisis

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Volunteers for Youth Justice has experienced a year of empowering families in Bossier, Caddo, Webster, Claiborne, Bienville, and Jackson Parishes. Our mission is to provide a community caring for children, youth, and families in crisis. In 2017 we afforded over 6,700 children and their families life changing resources. As our communities have continued to grow, the needs have become greater. VYJ has stepped up and created new programs with innovative concepts. Our goal remains consistent in the quest for optimal programs which empower individuals to move forward with lives that are productive and rewarding.

In recent years we have clearly identified that taking leadership models into the schools is the most effective manner to reach our youth. With this directive, we established a new program at Fair Park Preparatory Academy. Fair Park Tribal Court is a student-administered court that hears cases for minor infractions. A courtroom replica sets the stage in the Law Studies Class, where the students serve as the Master Jurors, Bailiffs, and Clerks. Court members do not determine guilt or innocence; however, they impose sanctions that

reflect restorative justice principles which hold their peers accountable. The philosophy of Tribal Court is to utilize peer pressure as a positive force, helping young people accept accountability for their actions while educating respondents and members of the court about the legal system.

Our success stories are comprised of the collaborative efforts of over 350 community volunteers, a dedicated staff, and Board of Directors that are committed to our vision and the services we provide. Helping others to embrace change and live lives that are healthy and thriving continue to be a key element to the mission embraced at VYJ.

We are optimistic that 2018 will be a year of great possibilities partnered with opportunities which will enrich lives, as well as meet the challenges facing our children, youth and families. With your support, Volunteers for Youth Justice will continue to be a pillar of excellence in northwest Louisiana.

Best Regards,
Kelli Todd
Executive Director



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Working with VYJ has been a total pleasure! The staff and volunteers are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and diligent. There is always an awareness that every program can be improved and a requirement that there be continual evaluation to ensure there are positive results. Some non-profit organizations have good intentions and the programs sound good, but VYJ has provable outcomes so you, as a contributor, know that your time and funds are truly making a difference.

The Board of Directors consists of dedicated volunteers who are conscientious stewards of VYJ's funds, making sure they are used prudently and properly. (It is remarkable that administrative costs

make up only 8% of organizational expenditures). These individuals also participate in VYJ activities that range from fundraising to passing out gifts at the holiday party for foster children. This active board further ensures the success of VYJ's programs.

Our community has many needs, but we also have the people who contribute to its welfare. We thank each and every one of you for your gifts that have made a difference to a child which has in turn made a difference to a family, a neighborhood, and larger communities. Never doubt that you, yes you, are improving life in northwest Louisiana.

Peace be with you. And, again, thank you.
Laurie Lyons
VYJ Board President



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6,700



VYJ provided services for over 6,700 children in 2017.



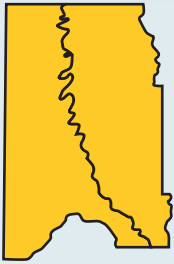
98%

The **CASA** program served 784 children utilizing 202 volunteers. 98% of children served were placed in safe and permanent homes.

Efforts were focused on **volunteer recruitment and retention** resulting

30%

in a 30% increase in the number of new volunteers for the **CASA** program and 88% of those remain active.



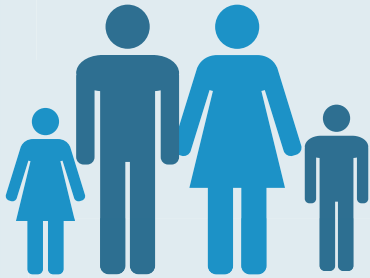
240

The Jumpstart program in Caddo and Bossier Parish provided 240 diversion services classes for children and their parents.



52

The new Tribal Court program saw 52 defendants who were able to avoid suspension by completing sentences imposed by peers focusing on restorative justice to make right who or what they wronged.



264

VYJ's **FINS** program worked with 264 families to secure appropriate family services in 2017.



94%

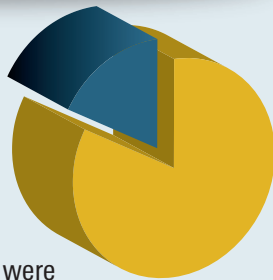
The **truancy** program was able to resolve 94% of its cases by keeping families out of the court system. This is a significant increase from the 75% from last year.

32% ↑

The **Mentoring program** served 441 students, a 32% increase from last year. These students were given opportunities to go on college tour trips, attend career fairs, attend various plays and musical performances in town, and go to Magic Springs in Arkansas.

83%

The **Conflict Resolution** program served 623 children in Caddo Parish. 83% of children referred for fighting were diverted from the juvenile court system. 80 children were able to benefit from the Intervention Program which seeks to adjust the behaviors that are known to lead to fighting.



1,228

The **K-5 TASC Truancy** program received 1,228 unique referrals through December 31, 2017. Only 2% went to court due to non-compliance. The new Uniform Closet was able to provide uniforms for over 150 elementary-aged children.



2017 By The Numbers

Administrative Costs

8%

Administrative costs make up only 8% of organizational expenditures.





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PROGRAMS AND SERVICES...

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates):

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Specially trained volunteers serve as officers of the court and “friends” to children in need. These volunteer advocates are assigned by judges to speak on behalf of children who have been placed in foster care due to abuse or neglect. Their primary objective is to ensure that each child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

YOUTH PROGRAMS:

Contact-shonda.houston@vyjla.org

JumpStart (Power of Choice & Stamp Out Shoplifting) – A diversion program providing educational workshops in a support group setting with volunteer facilitators trained to address the needs of at risk youth.

Teen Court – A program designed to offer non-violent, first-time juvenile offenders the opportunity to be judged by a jury of their peers, accept responsibility for their actions, and make restitution for their offenses.

GEMS & GENTS Mentoring – A program that brings together young people with trained facilitators and adult mentors who assist with their educational, relational, and emotional development through group sessions, recreational activities, community service, and one-on-one mentoring.

Leadership Academy is a program of GEMS & GENTS, to provide a safe and supportive environment, whereby students are encouraged to improve their academic achievement, develop life skills, and embrace the servant leadership model for giving back to their school and community. Students are paired with one-on-one mentors who serve as leadership role models.

Conflict Resolution – A collaborative effort between VYJ and the Caddo Parish School Board, designed to address the dynamics that lead to violent behavior, with the goal of preventing future school fight violations.

Facts of Life Program – A character development curriculum. This program is designed to provide adjudicated juvenile offenders from the age of 12-16 with a method of decision making. This program shows participants what is required for a rewarding quality of life and at the same time providing participants with a set of guidelines for making choices by which a good life can be obtained and maintained.

COURT PROGRAMS:

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FINS (Families in Need of Services): – Programs for families on the verge of crisis due to the ungovernable behavior of a child. The primary goal of FINS is to secure appropriate services to remedy the family's dysfunction.

Truancy FINS: – Specialized FINS officers work with the Caddo Parish school system, children and their families to identify the root cause of excessive unexcused absences and secure appropriate services to remedy the cause.

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TASC: – The purpose of TASC is to provide early identification and assessment of truant children in grades K-5 and the prompt delivery of coordinated interventions to prevent continued unexcused school absences.

2016-2017 Financial Report

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Individual and Corporate Contributions	114,841	6%
Grants	1,224,472	59%
Program Support	571,814	27%
Unrealized Gains	24,770	1%
Miscellaneous	64,436	4%
Total Support and Revenues	2,081,892	

EXPENSE

Program Expense	1,882,690	92%
Administrative Expense	163,030	8%
Total Expenses	2,045,720	
Change in Net Assets	36,172	
Net assets, beginning of year	437,417	
Net assets, end of year	473,589	

COMMUNITY PARTNERS





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MISSION


The mission of Volunteers for Youth Justice is to provide a community caring for children, youth, and families in crisis.

GUMBO GLADIATORS



2017-2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Mitton, President
Sarah Garrett, Vice President
Deanna Beaubouef, Secretary
Jason Berard, Treasurer
Betty Henderson
Erica Thomas
Gary Bazer
Lizbeth Rosado
Phillip Martinez
Pamela Moser
Steve Prator
D. Logan Schroeder
Carlos Prudhomme
Diane Atkins
Senae Hall
Felicia Hamilton
Laurie McGehee
Clifton Tate



The 6th Annual Battle of the Gumbo Gladiators:
March 24, 2018
Noon - 4 pm
Festival Plaza
Downtown Shreveport



GET INVOLVED

- **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:**
 - Become a CASA volunteer** – advocate for children in the foster care system
 - Become a Mentor** – provide leadership skills for youth in our local schools
 - Guest Speaker** – present information to our youth for our diversion classes
 - Board of Directors** – serve as a volunteer Board member to help guide our organization
 - Battle of the Gumbo Gladiators** – join the planning committee for our annual fundraiser
- **DONATE** – VYJ will use these funds to support and expand our programs and services.
- **ADVOCATE** – support VYJ’s mission by encouraging someone to donate or volunteer, “Liking” our Facebook Page, shopping through Amazon Smile.org, or by shopping at Kroger through the Kroger Community Rewards program.

CONTACT INFORMATION: 318-425-4413 www.vyjla.org