A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on the past year, I am truly amazed at the new programs that Volunteers for Youth Justice has embraced. One of VYJ’s largest expansions in 2019 involved our school-based diversion programs. These comprehensive programs have proven to reduce school suspensions, while also helping to improve attendance and academic outcomes. Students are provided the opportunity to ‘undo a wrong’ while learning better coping skills to assist with challenging situations. Utilizing 66 mentors, we served 191 students at J.S. Clark, Fair Park, Green Oaks, and Huntington with mentoring/leadership skills. With a focus on resolving school fights, VYJ currently operates a Conflict Resolution class for all middle and high schools in Caddo Parish. This past year, 819 students successfully completed the program and were diverted from the court system.

We expanded our school-based Teen Court program to Huntington High School where 20 students comprise the Raider Court. These student leaders are responsible for hearing minor discipline matters of students in order to help the students avoid out of school suspension. If a student is referred to the Court, they will be held responsible for their actions and must complete the sentence imposed by their peers. A unique and effective component to the program is pairing the student who completes Raider Court with an upperclassman to check in weekly to guard against further disciplinary issues. Peer participation and restorative justice are a winning combination, providing an effective disciplinary program for our youth.

The success of Raider Court has drawn attention across the country following the Global Youth Conference in Las Vegas. In December 2019, VYJ presented our Raider Court model at this unique national/global conference focused on youth court programs. Over 100 participants attended this exciting presentation and as a result, we have received interest from several school districts. Most notably, Arkansas and California have requested guidance in the development of their own school-based programs. In early February, the Little Rock, Arkansas school district brought a delegation of six principals to visit our Raider Court and observe the success stories firsthand.

Due to the high interest in Raider Court, along with VYJ’s restorative justice school-based initiatives, we are in the early planning process for a one-day conference in June, which we feel would be an effective strategy to accelerate the duplication of these dynamic programs in other school districts.

As VYJ looks forward to the future, we are committed to work at the grassroots level to ensure that our children and families are served with robust programs that will bring about long-term generational change. We could not create this thriving culture without the support from our volunteers, donors, and community stakeholders. We are grateful knowing our next steps will be guided by the heart of those who support our mission to ‘provide a community caring for children, youth, and families in crisis.’

Best Regards,
Kelli Todd
Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

VYJ has been serving children and their families for over 38 years in Northwest Louisiana. Volunteers for Youth Justice offers 11 life-changing programs designed to empower families. The focus is directed on the skill sets needed for keeping children out of the court room and in the class room, as well as advocacy for the abused and neglected child. In 2019, VYJ provided services for over 5,200 children and their families in seven parishes across Northwest Louisiana.

I have had the opportunity to volunteer in numerous capacities for VYJ for many years. My roles have been rewarding and diverse. As I reflect on my volunteer work with VYJ and the impact I have hopefully made in the lives of children and families, I can say undoubtedly that VYJ has changed my life. The many opportunities to volunteer have allowed me to not only recognize the blessings in my life, but also foster a desire to offer a helping hand to those individuals who are experiencing difficulties.

I have watched VYJ’s programs expand in the past few years in order to better meet the needs of our community. The staff, along with over 350 volunteers, have embraced the organization’s mission and worked tirelessly to affect favorable outcomes for children and families. VYJ has allowed me to see and believe through leadership and speaking positively into the lives of others, that I too have afforded a family key resources to change their story for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Kathy Mitton
VYJ Board President
The CASA program served 648 children using 221 advocates who volunteered 8,931 hours.

The Calming Studio, a sensory rich room to aid with regulating those who have experienced the effects of complex trauma, opened in the Juvenile Parish Courthouse. Over 250 children visited the Calming Studio in 2019.

Volunteers for Youth Justice
a community serving for children in crisis

377 volunteers assisted VYJ in carrying out our mission of providing a community caring for children, youth, and families in crisis.

2019 By The Numbers

5,200
VYJ provided services for over 5,200 children in 2019.

8,931
The CASA program served 648 children using 221 advocates who volunteered 8,931 hours.

250
The Calming Studio, a sensory rich room to aid with regulating those who have experienced the effects of complex trauma, opened in the Juvenile Parish Courthouse. Over 250 children visited the Calming Studio in 2019.

257
The Jumpstart program in Caddo and Bossier Parishes provided diversion services classes for 257 children and their parents.

337
VYJ’s FINS/Truancy program worked with 337 families to secure appropriate services in 2019.

90%
The Conflict Resolution program served 819 youth in Caddo Parish. 90% of youth referred for fighting were diverted from the juvenile court system.

97%
The school-based Teen Court program expanded to Huntington High School and deliberated 33 cases regarding school disciplinary issues. 97% of these issues were resolved through students utilizing restorative justice principles to help their peers.

222
VYJ took over management of the Misdemeanor Referral Center in 2019 and diverted 222 children from the Juvenile Detention Center by providing community based resources for first-time offenders.

191
The GEMS & GENTS Mentoring Program served 191 students who learned valuable life and leadership skills from staff and experienced community mentors.

185
2019 saw the addition of the Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) Advocate program in which 185 children were served. 40 advocates were trained to work with children and caregivers in the foster care system to address trauma related experiences.

2,219
The K-5 TASC Truancy program through a partnership with Porter’s Cleaners, was able to assist 388 Caddo Parish K-5 students with uniforms and school supplies. 94% of the 2,219 truancy referrals were diverted from the court system.

Administrative Costs
5%
Administrative costs make up only 5% of organizational expenditures.
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates):  
Contact - christi.robinson@vyjla.org  
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.

TBRI® (Trust Based Relational Intervention):  
Contact - lucinda.miles@vyjla.org  
TBRI® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® uses Empowering Principles to address physical needs, Connection Principles for attachment needs, and Correcting Principles to disarm fear-based behaviors.

Misdemeanor Referral Center:  
Contact - kristin.stubbs@vyjla.org  
The Misdemeanor Referral Center assists law enforcement when a juvenile has been charged with a minor crime. Youth offenders are brought to the referral center by law enforcement officers keeping them out of the Juvenile Detention Center. The youth then receive a comprehensive assessment and referrals to community based resources that support behavior change.

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.

COURT PROGRAMS: Contact - leanna.criswell@vyjla.org  
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.

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.

TASC PROGRAM:  
Contact - shannon.wyche@vyjla.org  
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.

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| **EXPENSE**                |
| Program Expense            | 2,667,952 | 95% |
| Administrative Expense     | 146,923  | 5% |
| **Total Expenses**         | 2,814,875 |
| Change in Net Assets       | (137,744) |
| Net assets, beginning of year | 750,408 |
| Net assets, end of year    | 612,664  |
The mission of Volunteers for Youth Justice is to provide a community caring for children, youth, and families in crisis.

2018-2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Mitton, President
Phillip Martinez, Vice President
Deanna Beaubouef, Secretary
Joel Fair, Treasurer
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Laura Seabaugh
Jason Sunderland, DC
Angie White

GET INVOLVED

• VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:
  Become a Volunteer – be a voice 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 in 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, shopping through AmazonSmile.org or the Kroger Community Rewards program.

• FIND US -
  Facebook @volunteersforyouthjustice

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