A GREY-T Teaching in Action at Morehead YDC

Something you hear and see a lot at Morehead Youth Development Center is “Have a GREYT day!” That’s because the young women at the Rowan County facility have a very important job to do. They train and socialize rescued greyhounds that have been retired from racing, in collaboration with Morehead State University and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). After they spend 12 weeks working with the special animals, a graduation ceremony is held and the dogs are adopted by their “forever families.”

This program and many other fantastic initiatives were highlighted on November 16 at a KECSAC Teaching in Action training hosted by the DJJ facility, which was named a 2012 Best Practice Site for Alternative Education by the Kentucky Department of Education.

A group of KECSAC staff and teachers from around the state were welcomed to the program by Donna Stanley, head teacher, and Paula Stafford, school administrator with Rowan County Schools. Kris Mann, the DJJ Superintendent, also

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A Message From Dr. Ronnie Nolan

Director’s Corner

Oh, it’s that time of year! The time when the holiday season descends on all of us like a blanket of snow during the night! I admit; I love it! I love the Christmas music on the radio, I love seeing Santa everywhere I go, and I even enjoy the traffic. I know, it doesn’t really make much sense to me either, but I do.

Like many of you, this season conjures up memories of my childhood, of the days we spent between school semesters riding our sleds down dangerously steep hillsides, drinking hot chocolate in our footed pajamas and poking the fire in the fireplace to watch the sparkling embers shoot up the chimney. While I didn’t have a lot of material things growing up, I was lucky enough to spend every single Christmas with my mom.

I still do actually, traveling each year on Christmas Eve to my childhood home where we eat way too much, scream at each other with love (usually) and exchange gifts painstakingly selected with each individual character’s personality in mind. I sometimes dread the hyperactivity of the events, but I’m pleasantly surprised each year with just how wonderful it all turns out. No question about it, I do love this time of year.

Our children, on the other hand, those in the care or custody of the Commonwealth, don’t usually have the luxury of a trip home over the holidays or memories filled with images of Normal Rockwell type scenery. So, as we celebrate this holiday season in whatever way you choose to celebrate, we should remember all the precious gifts we have, while also letting this season serve as a call to action for the kids served in our programs across the state.

Our teachers and administrators, those on the front line of service, are often surrogate extended families for our kids. Students in our classrooms, often survivors of horrendous abuse and crippling neglect, don’t always have that comforting home, filled with positive accolades and a loving hug on a cold morning. They rely on us, on the teachers who meet them each morning with a smile and high expectations for their success. They rely on the staff at their residential group home or juvenile justice facility for the love and support they have often missed in their short lives.

Together, all of us, educators and residential staff of our partnering agencies, must come together at this critical time to show our support for our students. To help them build experiences they can reflect on with a sense of pride and fondness; to help them build a future filled with the vision for a better tomorrow and the skills needed to make it a reality.

With that in mind, I am going to do something I haven’t really done up to this point, a break from my usual call to action. Instead, I would challenge all of us, all those who work in our programs or are connected in some way to the state agency children to find a way to make this holiday season a memorable one for our students. Take a few minutes to connect with the residential private childcare providers who have created a home for our kids and volunteer with them, donate to their programs, find a way to help them help our kids. In the end our kids will be better because of the gifts you give and you’ll also grow as a result.

I hope you all have a great holiday season!
A Message From Dr. Ronnie Nolan

Once a month, a group of students and teachers will travel to Interfaith Hospitality Network’s Day Center to assist the young children there with therapeutic play and literacy skills as well as put together intake packets, sanitize toys, and participating in gardening projects.

“I’m very excited about this learning experience for my students!” Theresa Snyder, an English teacher at the Day Treatment said. “Being able to reinforce their lessons about hunger and homelessness in the classroom with hands on experience is priceless. I foresee a lot of long term benefits for them out of this service learning project.”

When asked how the students felt they would benefit from this experience, one student replied, “I’ll benefit from volunteering by getting to help families that are trying to get their lives back together. I’ll also learn more about how people become homeless and the steps they take to get back on their feet.”

If you would like more information about this project, please contact Theresa Snyder at theresa.snyder@campbell.kyschools.us.

(LEFT) Campbell County students help clean and organize book shelves for the children at Interfaith Hospitality Network’s Day Center. Article and photo reprinted from Cincinnati.com by Julie Wharton of Children, Inc.
Unified Juvenile Code Task Force Recommendations Have Potential Impact on KECSAC Programs

A working group of the state’s Unified Juvenile Code Task Force reported it would advise against incarcerating any child age 12 or under in Kentucky. Chief District Justice Lisa Jones of Owensboro, who serves on the Jurisdiction working group of the task force, said the group found that “over 90 percent of children 12 and under do not understand what they are doing when they enter a guilty plea in court. They don’t understand who the court players are; they don’t understand the effect that has on their lives…”

Current KY law prohibits placing children age 10 and under in detention unless they are charged with a serious felony, according to statute. But state law has no minimum age for charging someone with a crime.

The task force is considering the group’s findings, and findings of two other working groups, as it drafts proposed changes to the unified juvenile code for possible consideration by the full Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary and the Legislative Research Commission.

The Jurisdiction working group also suggested that court action and detention not be used for status offenses—behaviors that include truancy or running away from home that would not be criminal if committed by an adult but are considered to be an offense due to the child’s age. Judge Jones said the state needs to “reroute” status offenders to services that better meet their needs.

Also important, the judge said, is early uniform screening, family inclusion, local holding shelters that prevent the need to transport juveniles to detention several counties away, and improved “financial mapping” that ensures funding of services for juveniles served by state agencies. “We need to know where the money is currently going so we can see how it may be utilized differently or more effectively,” she said.

The two other working groups reviewed and advised the task force on truancy and assessment issues. Johnson County Schools Superintendent Steve Trimble, who reported for the Truancy working group, said his group concluded that juvenile detention should be used as a last resort.

“The last thing anyone, including family court judges, court designated workers, and (school personnel) want to see is a child placed in juvenile detention. However, taking juvenile detention off the table as a final outcome...could be destructive to all programs,” he said. Trimble clarified that no student is placed in detention for being a status offender, but by court order.

The Assessment working group, whose report was given by Louisville area public defender Peter Schuler, advised that assessment tools used to determine where troubled youth should be placed need to be juvenile-specific, evidence-based, and administered by qualified individuals. For example, he said a county attorney might determine that a juvenile needs to go to court whereas a court designated worker might interpret the situation differently. Disproportionate minority confinement also needs to be addressed, along with other issues, Schuler said.

The state’s current Unified Juvenile Code, enacted in 1986, was significantly amended in 1994 but has been altered in one way or another by the General Assembly nearly every session since. Suggested changes by the working groups, and task force’s report anticipated by early January, should address ambiguities and inconsistencies found in the code by those who use it regularly, according to HCR 129.

This Press Release is reprinted from LRC
Cindy Held Joins KECSAC as Communication and Development Coordinator

I am Cynthia Held (I go by Cindy), the new Communication & Development Coordinator for KECSAC! If you’ve been with KECSAC for a while, you may remember me as the Training Specialist for a short stint in 2007/2008. I am happy to be back with KECSAC and the great people who work here! I graduated from EKU in 2006 with a bachelor’s in Journalism and a minor in English, and have since held various communications and marketing positions. My hometown is Richmond, KY and where I live now. I lived in Maryland for two years in a beautiful area near the Patuxent River and Chesapeake Bay, but moved back in 2010. My family is small, including my mother and father who also live in Richmond, and my older brother who lives in Liberty, KY. In the next few years I hope to complete my master’s degree in a communications related field. Transitioning to a new job is sometimes daunting, but I feel I bring a strong skill set and experience to this position and I’m excited to work with new and familiar faces!

Innovative Strategies Series – We can come to you!

Does your program or district have a need for training? KECSAC wants to help. Rather than asking you to travel to professional development opportunities, we want to bring those straight to you. Let us know what need your district has and we’ll try to help by bringing in training. Contact Katie Helton at katie.helton@eku.edu / (859) 622-8538 to find out more!

SAVE THE DATE

12th Annual
Alternative Strategies for Educating Students At-Risk
A Conference for Educators in Alternative Settings
July 24-25, 2013 - Richmond, KY
New Pathways for Children Plans Expansion In 2013

New Pathways for Children has announced plans to build a new home for girls in Graves County. The residence will be built on property recently donated through the estate of Eldon and Emma Belle Gardner.

The Gardners donated 25 acres of land in 1991 on which the first boys’ home was constructed for New Pathways. Over the years, they continued to be benefactors for New Pathways. They established the Gardner Charitable Foundation with most income from the Foundation supporting the work of New Pathways. Mr. Gardner died in 2001, and Mrs. Gardner died in 2012.

“They never had children of their own, but had genuine hearts of compassion for children who are hurting,” Executive Director for New Pathways Glen Burse said.

The Gardners’ house and 120 acres were given to New Pathways upon Mrs. Gardner’s death as an outright gift, separate from the Foundation.

“Mrs. Gardner dreamed for years of having group homes for girls surrounding her house,” Burse said. “This will be the first of what eventually may be more.”

This expansion will replace the girls’ home currently located in the Reidland area, which is located in Paducah, and the young women in residence will be moved to the new home.

“Having all our homes in Graves County will make oversight and administration easier,” Burse added.

New Pathways plans to construct a residential style house with approximately 5,400 square feet that will provide living space for as many as 14 residents. The facility will also accommodate a classroom for 14 students, a conference room for family meetings and offices for a counselor and case manager. Tentative plans are to start construction in March 2013.

New Pathways currently operates two group homes for boys and is licensed to serve 27 boys and 12 girls. Their mission as a private, non-profit agency is to minister to the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of at-risk youth in a Christ-like atmosphere, seeking to instill in them a sense of hope, competency, belonging and responsibility.

Bellewood, Brooklawn Plan Merger to Better Serve Children

Bellewood Home for Children and Brooklawn Child and Family Services, each with more than 160 years of dedicated service, are pursuing a potential merger to become Kentucky’s most comprehensive child welfare agency, serving hundreds of abused, neglected and homeless children and their families across the Commonwealth.

The boards of both agencies voted in September to move forward with plans to merge and begin the final due diligence process to formalize the union. Bellewood and Brooklawn, which each have main campuses in Louisville, serve children and families in need through much of Kentucky.

“Combining the resources of the two non-profits into one will create a united agency with a comprehensive continuum of care for children,” said Bruce Ferguson, chairman of Brooklawn’s board.

Mary Kate Poling, current President and CEO of Brooklawn is slated to lead the merged agency as President and CEO and Brad Williamson, current Senior Vice President of Administration and CFO at Bellewood will be Chief Financial Officer.

Information from www.bellewood.org
Clark County Day Treatment students recently undertook a project to rename their school. The effort was initiated to increase school pride, belonging, and culture. Students first met in small groups to brainstorm possible names for the school, and after discussion in a large group they chose Phoenix Academy over the other suggestions.

The students’ main reason for choosing the name was directly tied to the meaning of the phoenix. The phoenix is a symbol of rebirth and new beginnings. The students felt that at their school, they had new hope and a new spirit about their education and future.

The Phoenix Academy Mission

“The Phoenix Academy is committed in providing a comprehensive array of treatment and educational services for at-risk youth. These services are designed to empower our students in assessing their academic, social emotional, and employability needs, evaluating their behaviors, and developing and achieving goals towards self-improvement. Our goal is to ensure that our students become college and/or career-ready, and productive citizens.”

Morehead Youth Development Administrator Named Kentucky Teacher Leader for December

Paula Stafford is doing double duty in the Rowan County school district. The 21-year educator is Rowan County Middle School assistant principal and administrator for the Morehead Youth Development Center (MYDC) and Sunrise Children’s Services, a residential treatment facility for juvenile girls in grades 7-12.

Donna Stanley, lead teacher for the Morehead Youth Development Center, said Stafford’s leadership is evident in both positions.

“She holds high standards for all students and finds ways to make sure they have all the opportunities we can possibly offer,” Stanley said of Stafford, Kentucky Teacher’s December Leader of the Month.

Stanley added that Stafford is driven to give high-quality technology opportunities to MYDC students, and she advocates making sure all state agency students receive the same electronic footprint as other Kentucky students.

“Her knowledge and understanding of our special population makes her an exceptionally strong advocate for these youth,” Stanley said. “She’s a master facilitator for making good things happen, is always there to help and always there to lead.”

Stafford said one of her biggest assets as an educator is her dedication to her students.

“I have high expectations for students and work with them to let them know what I expect,” Stafford said. “My experiences confirm that people rise to the level of expectation you hold for them. I’m proactive rather than reactive. I’m dedicated and expect the same of people with whom I work.”

Stafford said there are no tricks to effectively working with students. “The key is knowing each one on a personal level,” she said. “Humans are social creatures, and most of us have an innate desire to do what is expected of us. The adolescent brain thrives on challenge and responds to novel or unique situations. Providing students with opportunities to experience such situations is essential.”

Stafford is passionate about being an educator.

“I will always stand up for what I believe to be right for students,” she said. “Years ago I read a book by Linda Rief. She made a statement to the effect that none of us will reach every student, but all of us must try to reach each student. Where I try and fail, another person will try and succeed.

“It seems we have so many students for whom the adults in their lives have given up,” Stafford added. “No student is dispensable. Each is valuable and has worth. Sometimes we, the school adults in their lives, have to believe that for them until they are able to believe it for themselves.”

Information from www.kentuckyteacher.org