

# Juvenile Justice Report

The official newsletter of the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Summer 2004

Neil Hernandez, Commissioner



DJJ Deputy Commissioner Andrew Gonzalez presents 25-year service awards to Stephanie Prussack, Susan Lukin, Joan Gittens and Ed Birch during Department of Juvenile Justice 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary reception at The Arsenal building in Central Park.

## Juvenile Justice turns 25

### 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ceremony draws hundreds; NYS Supreme Court Justice Michael A. Corriero delivers keynote address

On Wednesday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice commemorated a quarter of a century of service during a festive celebration atop the historic Arsenal Building in Central Park.

More than 200 employees and their family members, city officials and friends of the agency attended the event. Horizon Chaplain Miguel Diaz lead the invocation which was followed by a powerful rendition of the National Anthem performed by New York University student Kristina Lomonaco.

State Supreme Court Justice Michael A. Corriero provided the keynote address, which commanded a standing ovation. A proclamation sent by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg proclaiming August 4, 2004 "Department of Juvenile Justice Day" was read by agency Deputy General Counsel Stacy Jacob.

Deputy Commissioner Andrew Gonzalez presented 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Awards to 19 current employees who joined the agency as staff members during its first year of operation. Each employee was greeted by a round of applause from those in attendance and presented with a plaque engraved with their name.

DJJ Commissioner Neil Hernandez delivered closing remarks and invited everyone in attendance to enjoy a rooftop reception. Those who journeyed

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## William Soto Earns Purple Heart for Bravery in Iraq

DJJ employee and MCCU's JC, William Soto, was recently awarded a Purple Heart for bravery serving as a member of the National Guard in Iraq.



Sgt. Soto, stationed in Baghdad, holds the title of Personnel Services Specialist in the Army and is performing the duties of a Military Policeman at the Baghdad Police Academy.

Recently, Soto sustained an injury requiring stitches in both arms after mortar fire caused the ceiling to collapse in the building where he was training a class of students. Despite the risk to his personal safety and soaring temperatures that often surpass 120 degrees, Sgt. Soto's spirits have not been dampened.

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## Emergency Preparedness is Top Priority at DJJ

Following Mayor Bloomberg and OEM's lead, the Department of Juvenile Justice has taken broad steps to ensure that the agency is similarly prepared to respond to emergencies of any kind.



*OEM: Keeping New York safe*

In May, several of DJJ's management staff received specialized emergency response training at OEM's headquarters in Brooklyn. In addition, at its monthly GOALS meeting in June, management staff and facility super-

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## William Soto –

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A Navy man during the 1980s, the 45-year-old MP is proud to be battling terrorism and planting the seeds of freedom and democracy abroad.

“We are planting the seeds of future progress in these areas and I have grown very fond of the Iraqi people,” Sgt. Soto wrote in a recent e-mail. “They are a kind, generous, proud and funny people.”

Soto praised the ability of the Iraqi people to maintain positive spirits and a sense of humor amid the violence that surrounds them. He has grown especially close to his Iraqi interpreters, Azziz and Nahwas, and has a profound appreciation for what he has learned of Iraqi history and culture.

The DJJ Juvenile Counselor joined



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*Susan Lukin receives 25-Year Award from Deputy Commissioner Gonzalez.*

the National Guard shortly after 9/11 out of a desire to serve his country and do his part to protect homeland security. He reports that he does miss the United States and especially his wife.

MCCU Director Efrain Figueroa praised Sgt. Soto's bravery and compassion, saying, "He's all heart!"

MCCU recently organized collection of a care package that will be shipped to William Soto in Iraq at the end of August.

Friends and colleagues of William Soto may contact him via e-mail at [william.f.soto@us.army.mil](mailto:william.f.soto@us.army.mil)

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary –

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to The Arsenal's North Roof were treated to a sumptuous selection of food and beverages. Past and present employees, family and friends also enjoyed an opportunity to mingle while taking in stunning views of Central Park.

The Arsenal serves as headquarters to the Department of Parks & Recreation and is one of two buildings within Central Park's borders that predate the park itself. Recognized for outstanding architecture and unrivaled views of the City's natural landscape, the Arsenal was designated an official New York City Landmark in 1967.

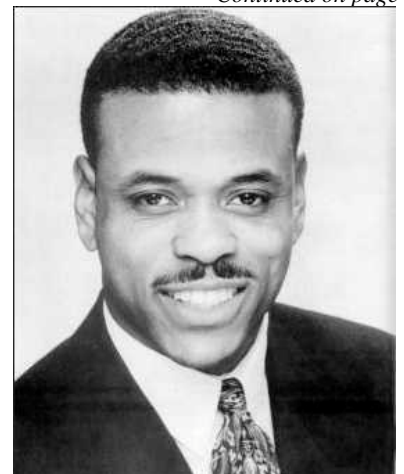
## One Year Later: Slain Council Member James E. Davis re- membered as friend to DJJ, champion of good government

Heavy hearts were visible throughout DJJ on July 23, 2004 as employees remembered slain City Council Member James E. Davis who was killed at the hands of a disgruntled rival in City Hall last year. Davis was a visible and effective legislator who was known throughout the agency as a tireless advocate for New York City's youth.

DJJ Commissioner Hernandez and other agency staff members worked closely with Davis, appearing at public hearings and events in which he was involved to identify opportunities to better serve the needs of youth in the criminal justice system.

As chairperson of the City Council's Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, James Davis was a familiar face to DJJ employees whom he met during visits to agency facilities. Widely recognized and always at the center, Davis was an influential leader who used his intellect and experience to advance the interests of his constituents.

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**James E. Davis**

## Vilma Batista and Clara Melendez Receive Prestigious Bob Rader Award

DJJ employees Clara Melendez and Vilma Batista have been named recipients of the prestigious 2004 Bob Rader Award by the National Juvenile Detention Association.

Supervisory Juvenile Counselor Batista was named "Line Staff Worker of the Year" and Personnel Coordinator Melendez was named "Detention Service Worker of the Year". They are two of only 72 individuals nationwide to receive the award and the only recipients in New York State to be recognized by the coveted distinction.

The Bob Rader Awards are presented each year by the National Juvenile Detention Association to recognize outstanding staff members in the juvenile detention field.

Bridges Executive Director Dennis Anyata had high praise for DJJ's 2004 Rader Award recipients, "It's wonderful to see Vilma and Clara receive national recognition for all that they do. They are outstanding examples of just how dedicated DJJ staff is to providing quality



*DJJ employee, Richard Gonzalez, trains at Fort Hood, Texas*

custody and care to juveniles entrusted to us."

The Bridges Executive Director also said, "Clara Melendez has gone above and beyond anything we've asked of her and Vilma Batista is a go-to person in admissions. We are lucky to have them."

The National Juvenile Detention Association has presented both employees with a special certificate commemorating this award and notified local news media of their award status.

Ms. Melendez has been with the agency since 1988 and Ms. Batista since 1995.

Plant Management Supervisor Benny Contorno and Supervisory Juvenile Counselor Taiwo Oladele were recipients of the prestigious award in 2003.

## DJJ Bravery on the Frontlines

Richard Gonzalez, Plant Management Supervisor at the Horizon Juvenile Center, just completed his training at Fort Hood, Texas, where he is scheduled to embark for Iraq at the beginning of September.

Sgt. Gonzalez has been trained as a weapons specialist. The 39-year old Gonzalez reports that he has been nicknamed 'Antique,' as most of his colleagues are just 18 years old. No doubt, those colleagues will benefit from the experience and insights he has acquired over a few additional decades.

MCCU recently installed a bulletin

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## Commissioner's Message

*By Neil Hernandez*



It was wonderful to see so many of you on August 4<sup>th</sup> when we marked the agency's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at The Arsenal in Central Park. This celebration recognized the great work of the agency, which was born out of crisis in 1979 to be solely dedicated to providing custody and care for juveniles in detention. The ensuing 25 years of reform are due to dedicated staff both past and present, who contributed so much to our mission of making a difference in the lives of our young people. This includes the many staff who have come and gone since then and those of us who joined the DJJ family later on. And, there are a select group who have stayed the entire 25 years, including Ed Birch, Marius Donadelle, George Edwards, Carl Emmanuel, Norman Fullwood, Joan Gittens, Roberta Hines-Anthony, Nathan Kalmanson, Susan Lukin, Alexander McRae, Eleanor Moody, George Nichols, Stephanie Prussack, Joya Ramirez, Louis Sbar, Lewis Steele, Irma Stephens, Warner West and Roslyn White.

DJJ staff are also making a difference beyond our City. Stationed in Baghdad, JC William Soto received a Purple Heart while serving our country and Plant Management Supervisor Richard Gonzalez is headed to Iraq after training.

As we enter our 26<sup>th</sup> year of service, we are continuing to build on the successes of the past 25 years by further improving safety and security and enhancing services to our young people. We are, for example, expanding our behavior management program and discharge planning services in collaboration with the Department of Youth and Community Development which is funded through City Council Public Safety Committee Chair Peter Vallone, Jr. and Juvenile Justice Subcommittee Chair Sara Gonzalez.

As the summer comes to a close, we as a city and an agency have so much to be proud of. Like Mayor Mike Bloomberg said recently, "New York City is back" and "our future is brighter than ever." From hosting the U.S. Open Tennis Tournament to the Republican National Convention, New York truly is the "Capital of the World."

## DJJ holds employee appreciation picnic

The Department of Juvenile Justice held its 2004 Employee Appreciation Picnic on June 5<sup>th</sup> at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. The event drew nearly 200 employees, family members and friends of the agency.

DJJ employees and their families were treated to a day-long celebration featuring good food, great fun, and healthy sports competition.

No expense or detail was spared in providing a memorable day for those attending and even the weather could not have been better.

DJJ's executive and management staff organized the picnic to say "thank you" to each and every agency employee for their hard work and unwavering dedication in serving the people of the City of New York.

The 2004 picnic featured a smorgasbord of delicacies, including hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, macaroni salad, tossed salad, watermelon, toasted marshmallows, beverages and more.



*Softball and volleyball champions display their trophies during DJJ's 2004 Employee Appreciation Picnic at Van Cortlandt Park.*

## DJJ Prepared –

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visors addressed the importance of emergency preparedness, including city initiatives, disaster scenarios, and new technology.

The success of any agency-wide preparedness program ultimately rests with DJJ's employees. Through practice drills, exercising grace under pressure, and keeping in mind the special needs of residents, DJJ will be safeguarded against avoidable complications in emergency situations.

"Knowing what to do and how to respond before emergencies occur is the best way to prepare," Commissioner Neil Hernandez said. "Effective advance planning can make all the difference."

The "Ready New York" emergency preparedness campaign is the product of more than 20 government, private and non-profit entities working together to ensure that New York City is prepared to respond to emergency situations.

For more information about "Ready New York", call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/html/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem)

## Davis Remembered –

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Despite his unexpected death, James Davis continues to have a positive impact through 'Love Yourself – Stop the Violence!' an organization he created to combat guns, violence and other challenges facing our City's young people. Davis' family, friends and colleagues carry on his ideals through their commitment to good government and service to the community.

"James E. Davis was a colleague and a friend to the Department of Juvenile Justice," DJJ Commissioner Neil Hernandez said. "His memory is a powerful source of inspiration to each of us as to the positive impact we can have on our communities and in the lives of our City's youth."

## DJJ on the Frontlines –

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board on the second floor at Central Office where the latest news, information and photographs of Richie Gonzalez and William Soto are posted.

DJJ Commissioner Hernandez has also received a letter from U.S. Commanding General Larry Ellis acknowledging the vital contributions of Sgt. Richie Gonzalez and Sgt. William Soto.

Sgt. Gonzalez is eager to hear from his DJJ family. Mail may be addressed to him at the following address:

**SGT GONZALEZ, RICHARD  
256 ECT  
HHC, 1/69 IN BN  
FT HOOD, TEXAS 76544**



### CONSULT YOUR CAREER COUNSELOR

"Where do I see myself in five years?" Is this a question that you often ask?

There may be a number of options available to you both at DJJ and other city agencies. Our Career Counselor, Karen Durante, is available to answer questions you may have regarding title changes, promotional opportunities and information on upcoming civil service and open competitive exams.

Contact Ms. Durante on the third floor at Central Office or by telephone at (212) 925-7779, extension 296.