

# Juvenile Justice Report

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

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Spring 2005

Neil Hernandez, Commissioner



Horizon Deputy Director of Operations Melvin Starkes with Bridges Juvenile Counselor Kisha Murdaugh and Horizon Juvenile Counselor Lorraine Anderson during a training session for incoming Juvenile Counselors and Houseparents.

## Class of 2005 Starts at DJJ Agency ranks to grow by more than 200 Juvenile Counselors and Houseparents by end of year

DJJ employees have already started to feel relief as the first class of 24 new Juvenile Counselors has been trained and deployed throughout agency facilities. The staff additions are part of Mayor Bloomberg's vision for the City of New York to build on historic crime reductions, reforming education for all children and working on economic development to invest in the future of our neighborhoods.

The Mayor's Budget Plan provides for more than 200 additional staff to further the important work DJJ employees do each day and recognizes the sacrifices made over the past three years.

The first class of Juvenile Counselors began its training in April with a visit from NYC Council Member and Chair of the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice Sara M. Gonzalez. Council Member Gonzalez addressed the incoming employees, speaking about DJJ's mission and the critical role each and every employees plays in enhancing safety and security in New York and making a positive intervention in the lives of our City's young people. The second class of Juvenile Counselors completed their training June 10<sup>th</sup>. A third class that includes Houseparents will start on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

DJJ's newest staff members will enhance quality and delivery of direct child care services throughout the agency's overall operation. The majority of the more than 200 positions will go to support operations and enable houseparents in non-secure detention to reduce their workday from 12 hours to 7 hours.

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## Q & A – DJJ First Deputy Commissioner Judy Pincus

Judith Pincus joined the agency in April as First Deputy Commissioner and second-in-command at DJJ. She brings more than 15-years of service in City government,



*First Deputy  
Judy Pincus*

most recently serving as a Deputy Director of the Mayor's Office of Operations where she had oversight of the City's public safety agencies, including DJJ and reported on agency performance as part of the Mayor's Management Report (MMR).

*Juvenile Justice Report* sat down with First Deputy Commissioner Pincus to find out what's in store for DJJ.

### *What are your primary duties at DJJ?*

My primary responsibility is to work closely with the Commissioner to help the agency navigate the challenges it faces today and to plan for those it

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## DJJ's Sgt. Soto Returns; Richard Gonzalez injured

DJJ's William Soto returned to the U.S. on March 18<sup>th</sup>, ending a tour of duty on the frontlines in Iraq.



*Sgt. Soto in Iraq*

Sgt. Soto, who earned a Purple Heart and endured enemy fire that collapsed the roof of his classroom, reports that his departure from Baghdad was bittersweet. While he was happy to return to his wife and family, he left behind good friends who continue the fight for freedom and face uncertain

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## Soto returns –

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fate in the still unsettled region. He says he worries about their safety.

William Soto worked his missions until just a few days before he departed and his exit preparations were filled with medical exams, weapons cleaning, and debriefings on health, family and psychological issues to assist him for his return to civilian life.

While he describes his return as euphoric, he states that he sometimes feels like a stranger. He has adapted and re-acclimated well so far, but the process continues. He keeps in touch with friends and colleagues made on the frontlines and gets together with those who live locally for dinner and movies and to reflect on experiences in Iraq. He also keeps in touch with the Iraqi interpreters and students still in Iraq who he became friends



*Commissioner Hernandez meets with children during 2005 'Take Our Children to Work' Day*

with during his tour of duty.

Sgt. Soto reports his focus right now is to spend as much quality time as possible with his wife and family. He is also looking forward to going back to school to complete his graduate degree.

Soto reports that his perspective has changed since being in Iraq. He now takes nothing for granted and realizes that every day is precious. He also has a new appreciation for a stress-free existence.

Welcome home, Sgt. Soto!

**GONZALEZ UPDATE:** Weapons Specialist and DJJ Plant Management Supervisor Richard Gonzalez sustained serious back and shoulder injuries in March while on duty in Baghdad. He was initially sent to Germany for treatment and is now in Texas awaiting surgery and rehabilitation therapy. No date has been set for his return to Iraq, but those who know his spirit suspect Gonzalez won't be stateside for long. DJJ sends its thoughts and best wishes for a speedy recovery!

## Class of 2005 –

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The addition of new staff will be welcome relief to DJJ's existing employees who have made tremendous sacrifices since September 11, 2001, helping the City navigate a serious budget crisis while simultaneously improv-

ing the overall services the City provides to its residents.

Later this summer, the Department of Juvenile Justice will hold an award ceremony to recognize the contributions and achievements of current staff members.

## CBI Workshops Make a Difference for DJJ Residents

DJJ's Community Based Intervention unit has been making significant strides in preparing youth to address real life issues, from anger management and conflict resolution to substance abuse and career decisions.

Four contract groups, including Friends of Island Academy, Community Counseling and Medication, Riverdale Mental Health Association and the National Council of Negro Women, are presently conducting resident workshops covering more than 60 different subject matters.

By May 2005, the groups had conducted 369 workshops with 1160 individual participants. Many of the residents have participated in more than one group and more than a quarter of those participating have taken part in at least five groups. One Bridges resident participated in 27 seminars.

The workgroups cover a broad range of topics, in categories such

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*DJJ's Lorraine Anderson trains new Juvenile Counselors and Houseparents at Central Office*



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## DJJ Named Finalist for Coveted Harvard U. 'Innovations in Government Award'

DJJ and the Vera Institute of Justice have been named finalists for the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award, a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The Adolescent Portable Therapy (APT) program, developed jointly by DJJ and Vera, is now eligible for one of six \$100,000 award prizes in what is often called the "Oscars" of government.

The Adolescent Portable Therapy program is a drug-treatment program for young people that addresses the transient nature of the juvenile justice system. The "portable" therapy and staff follow teens as they move between facilities and agencies to avoid a break in service delivery.

"APT stops any gaps in treatment, assuring that youth in the program will receive an uninterrupted stream of services," Commissioner Neil Hernandez said. "It represents a shift in thinking that is simple, yet incredibly effective."

Eighteen government initiatives – ranging from a federal website and

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*Marta Nelson of the Vera Institute of Justice promotes the Adolescent Portable Therapy Program at Harvard University in Boston*

## CBI workshops –

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as personal and interpersonal development and decision making. The initiative has had a significant impact on DJJ residents. In May, Friends of Island Academy Program Coordinator, Elizabeth Shaw, accompanied the presenter during a group held for the girls at Bridges. She observed that many of the girls were at first reluctant to participate. This was only temporary as most girls actively joined the discussions once they became comfortable with the format.

The Bridges groups focused on women and the choices they make. The girls noted that for those who have been in detention, it is not uncommon for them to revert to old behaviors after release. They discussed the need to make deliberate choices and not just let things happen. Many were surprised at how much control they exercise over their own lives and the importance of consciously directing that control.

"Time spent with DJJ provides a brief, but important opportunity to equip a young person with the skills to better their lives when they return to the community," said CBI Director Marilyn Farmer. "CBI workshops play a vital role in empowering our residents to make positive changes for themselves."

Residents have been vocal in recognizing and discussing areas they need to work on and identifying groups of particular interest. All facilities have noted significant resident interest in workshops focused on conflict mediation and avoiding conflict without "losing face."

CBI's contract sponsored groups have proven to be effective in promoting awareness about and inspiring residents to take active steps toward personal development and improving the quality of their decision making and their lives.

## Commissioner's Message

*By Neil Hernandez*



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's budget for the coming year contains much good news for DJJ. First, we've already started filling the 200 additional Juvenile Counselor and 10 Houseparent positions allocated for the agency, with the remaining to be filled during the next few months.

These new positions will further the important work that we do everyday to help young people and is recognition of your hard work and the sacrifices you have made over the past three years in helping the City manage through the budget crisis created by the tragedy of 9/11. Enhancements in other areas, including security, are also on the way.

The budget continues our Adolescent Portable Drug Treatment (APT) Program with the VERA Institute of Justice. As you may know, this program has been named a national finalist for Harvard University's 'Innovations in Government' Award, because of the unique and effective way it provides drug treatment to young people. APT assures that youth in the program will receive an uninterrupted stream of services – even after they leave detention.

To share a bit of more good news, four community-based organizations have been providing youth with a series of workshops that include anger management, gang violence awareness, violence reduction and life skills since January of this year. These workshops help young people during their stay in detention while providing skills they take with them after leaving custody.

Finally, we have a series of exciting activities planned during the next few months, including a graduation event for our new class of Juvenile Counselors, as well as an employee recognition ceremony. I hope to see you at these events.

In closing, I want to extend my best wishes to everyone for a very safe and enjoyable summer season.

## **First Deputy Commissioner Pincus –**

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may encounter moving forward.

DJJ has seen its role expand with a rise in demand for non-secure services, and its increasing visibility. I see my role as helping to create a dynamic infrastructure that can respond quickly and efficiently to day-to-day challenges.

### **What do you see as the biggest challenges DJJ faces?**

As an agency responsible for the care of young people involved in the juvenile justice system, DJJ is faced with challenges not faced by other agencies. We must balance our duty to safeguard public safety, while providing the best possible care for the young people in our custody. Our mission is made more challenging by the fact that we operate around the clock and issues that require immediate response can crop up at any time.

One of the challenges I face is learning what everyone does on a day-to-day basis. I find myself impressed not only by the complexity of the agency's operation, but also by the hard work of and results achieved by the agency's employees in each office and facility.

### **What do you see as DJJ's most significant achievements?**

Nearly 5,000 young people are placed in the care and custody of DJJ each year. Knowing that we have a limited time to work with them, I'm most impressed by the commitment of the entire staff to making a positive intervention in the lives of our residents during that time.

### **How does DJJ compare to other public safety agencies you have worked with?**

I see DJJ's role bridging the public safety and human services communities. Because of the age of our residents, we face a different range of complex issues than other public safety agencies. While DJJ may be smaller than other agencies, our mission is very important.

**ON THE SET:** James Williams makes film debut in 'The Interpreter' and re-make of 'The Honeymooners'

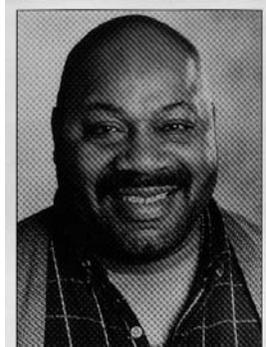
DJJ's James Williams, who previously appeared in NBC's 'Law & Order: Criminal Intent,' has been busy on the sets of 'The Interpreter' and 'The Honeymooners.'

In 'The Interpreter,' a UN-themed cerebral thriller released in April, Williams appeared in a dramatic sequence filmed on the streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Moviegoers enjoyed non-stop action and command performances by Nicole Kidman, Sean Penn and DJJ's head trainer and resident actor.

James, who is a card-carrying member of the Screen Actors Guild, demonstrates his star presence again in the movie version of the classic TV comedy 'The Honeymooners.' In the film, Cedric the Entertainer takes over the role of Brooklyn bus driver Ralph Kramden.

Look for James Williams in a key scene that takes place in a Williamsburg diner.



**James E. Williams**  
*DJJ's resident thespian*

## **Innovations Award –**

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a city program that engages young people in local public management to DJJ and Vera's jointly-developed APT program – will vie to receive one of the awards. The eighteen finalists were selected from more than 1,000 applicants.

"The amazing scope of government activity and creativity represented by these eighteen programs should give citizens renewed confidence in the quality of their public servants," said Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government Awards.

Each of the 18 finalists delivered a public presentation before the National Selection Committee at Harvard University on May 11th. The Committee is chaired by David Gergen of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard and includes former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste.

DJJ Commissioner Neil Hernandez and Vera Adolescent Portable Therapy Director Marta Nelson both spoke during the APT presentation and answered questions for selection committee members. Presentations were streamed live on the Internet through the Ash Institute website.

The Innovations in American Government Awards program, now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In 1986, DJJ was among the original recipients that received the prestigious 'Innovations Award' the first time they were distributed.