

JUNE
2011



9th
Edition

The Merrimac Message

Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission

From the Corner Office...

"You have to be very careful if you don't know where you are going because you might not get there"

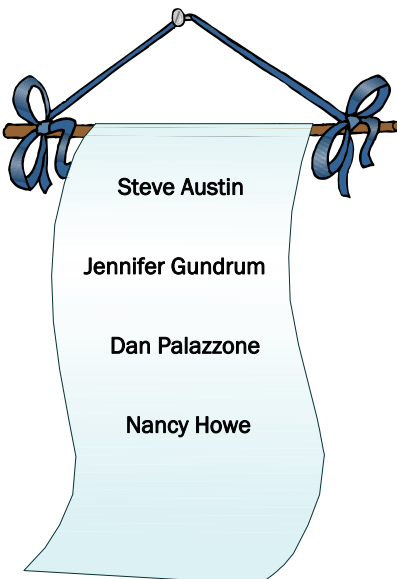


SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Annual Open House
- Merrimac Book Club
- Student for a Day
- New Employees

NEW ADDITIONS

Since our last newsletter, we had the good fortune to welcome the following new team members to the Merrimac Center:



I thought I'd start with another quote from my favorite "life philosopher" Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame catcher from the New York Yankees. We often find in our work with at risk youth that this is exactly how the child and family feel by the time they get to the Merrimac Center. They arrive confused, unsure, and unprepared for what lies ahead in their journey through the juvenile justice system. That is when we must step in to help them see how they got here and where that path is taking them. Most youth do not have a clear understanding of the big picture. Families feel helpless about the future, and no one seems hopeful about change. It is imperative that we invest the time to help clarify these issues and, together with the child and family, set a new path, a new road map. As we help them plot their course with the support of the courts, their family, and the community, perhaps real change can take place. This change, *this hope for the future* is key as we send them out on a new journey with a renewed sense of self and clarity of purpose. Hopefully, with our assistance, they can find their way and they **"will know where they are going so they might actually get there"**.

Switching gears, since our last newsletter we have had a busy few months here at Merrimac. We survived another session of the General Assembly without any cuts to detention funding, and relatively few bills were passed with significant impact on juvenile justice. We signed an agreement with DJJ to participate in their grant-funded re-entry program for the eastern region. This allows us to provide bed space for youth leaving the Juvenile Correctional Centers who need step-down assistance as they access community based services before being released home. Our quarterly General Staff Meeting in March was a success as we trained on the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument, as well as being updated on our post-dispositional program by Post-d Coordinator Sara Jones. Also, as part of this year's capital improvement plan, the upgrade to our security system is moving along and should be in place by the end of June, 2011.

I hesitate to mention this, but in the spirit of honest reporting, please check out my interview with Minnie Sippio on York County's government access channel 48, or watch it on YouTube at this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCSyeG5fANc>. By the way, I knew television added 10 pounds, but no one told me it added 10 years as well! A truly humbling experience...

I would like to close with a few comments about our Spring Open House. Let me start by saying WOW, what a wonderful event. The delicious food and impressive presentation by our residents were the highlights of the day! Guests attended from all parts of the juvenile justice related community including: law enforcement, schools, mental health, social services, court services, community organizations, faith-based organizations, volunteers, commission members, city/county administrators, and many, many more. I want to especially thank the Honorable Judge Isabel Atlee, DJJ Director Helivi Holland, and her Chief Deputy Mark Gooch for taking time out of their very busy schedules to attend our celebration. Last, and most importantly, I want to thank the entire Merrimac Team for making this day a huge success; I am so proud and blessed to be a part of such a dedicated group!

Mike Sawyer

POST-D "HOPE"



The Post-D Residents welcomed "Hope", the first baby chicken to hatch this season. Her birth was the reward for the care and attention of not only the mother hen, but also the residents.

The spring season brought about the annual Post-D plant sale, held after the open house, when residents had a chance to interact with community members and share new knowledge and skills. Many of these skills were acquired through the completion of the Master Gardener's Course which held a graduation ceremony on Friday, May 13th.



Residents also participated in two educational field trips this quarter: one to Colonial Williamsburg to meet with Wesley Green to learn about gardening in the 18th century and the various uses of plants, and more recently a trip was taken to visit Ron Crum's worm farm to learn about vermiculture and the various applications of worm byproducts. This information will be helpful in the implementation of new rain barrel/gutter extensions and a vermiculture worm bin in the Post-D yard, which was purchased with monies received by Ms. Jones and Mr. Hooker through the award of an HR Green Grant.

Rounding out the month was our successful campaign in connection with Flower Power Fundraising that raised \$275.00 through the generous support of local businesses and friends of Post-D and Merrimac Center. These funds will help supplement further educational and recreational experiences for our residents.

From the Kitchen:



VEGGIE WRAPS

Ms Hope Bryant, Senior Cook at Merrimac, recommends this quick and delicious snack for the summertime season:

Ingredients:

- Flour Tortillas
- Lettuce
- Shredded Carrots
- Fresh Broccoli
- Cucumber
- Onion
- Green or Red pepper
- Shredded Cheese

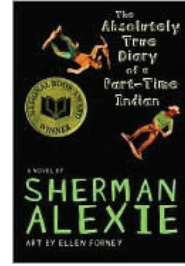
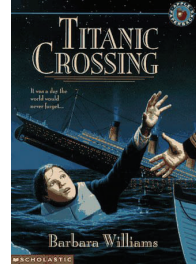
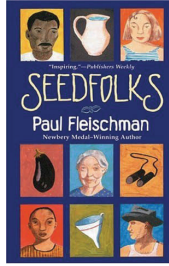
Sauce for each wrap:

- 3 T Ranch Dressing
- 1 t Chili Powder

Wash and chop all vegetables. Mix ranch dressing and chili powder together and spread over tortilla. Add veggies and top with cheese. Wrap up the tortilla and enjoy!



MERRIMAC BOOK CLUB



Merrimac students will now have the opportunity to take part in a monthly book club founded by two of our teachers, Mrs. Carson and Ms. Bailey. Each month a novel is selected and introduced during English class. Students who wish to participate, and are eligible, have two weeks to complete the assignment and use a 'bookmark' strategy guide for unfamiliar vocabulary. When time is up, the group meets in one of the classrooms to discuss the book over a special lunch. Students answer poignant questions about the reading and have the opportunity to share what they did or did not enjoy about that particular book. The meeting is made extra special by Mrs. Carson and Ms. Bailey, who prepare the classroom and decorate the table for the lunch and also bring special treats and fresh fruit for students to enjoy. To be eligible to participate in the lunch, students must meet the following requirements:

- Be at level 2 or 3
- Completely read the entire novel
- Have no serious infractions during the two week reading period
- Use the prepared bookmark as their entry ticket

Book club has been held for three months so far with an average of eight students participating each month. Selections included Seedfolks by Paul Fleishman, Titanic Crossing by Barbara Williams, and The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexi.

Student for a Day

Recently our teachers each took a turn shadowing a student for a day, in an effort to get a better understanding of a student's school-day experience here at Merrimac. The exercise turned out to be very beneficial. The teachers commented on how insightful it was to spend the day as a student. They were able to see areas of instruction that the students responded to well and also reflect on adjustments they may want to make to their instructional day. All in all a great experience!

John Whalen, Principal

Life has been a curvy rollercoaster ride
it has been a slippery water slide
It's been a baseball game
no play is ever the same
Life is the hardest test
preparing your departure from mom's nest
There's good days and bad
bad may outweigh the good just a tad
But through the ups and downs
different roads and towns
you have to stay strong
be a leader not follow along
Don't lose focus or hope
Emotions – You have to cope
Live like you know today is your last
you can't be stuck on the past
Just relax and smile
Enjoy life's crazy ride
Keep your head up and keep your pride



Merrimac Detention Center
a place I had to enter
At first I was filled with tears
but now I'm facing my fears
At first I did not want to learn to cope
but now my bodies filled with hope
At first I wanted to get out
but now I see I need this, without a doubt.
At first change was last on my mind
but now I see I was blind
At first I had zero respect
but now for that I do regret
At first, I couldn't have cared less
But now I care and barely stress
Merrimac Detention Center
a place I had to enter
At first I was a lost soul
but now I have control

POETRY WRITTEN BY L.W.

A POST-D RESIDENT

SPRING OPEN HOUSE 2011



Our annual open house was held on April 29th this year. After a delicious lunch and a warm welcome by Mr. Sawyer and Ms. Workman, attendees heard from a former resident about her time at Merrimac and how she is doing today. Several current residents read poetry and performed songs that they composed for the event. At the close of the presentation, tours of our facility, classrooms and greenhouse were given to anyone interested, and many people purchased plants, birdhouses and other items grown and made by our residents at the Lemon House plant sale.

