

Kane County Juvenile Justice Center

May 2023



A Letter from the Superintendent

Mike Davis

There are 16 county operated detention centers in the State of Illinois. These facilities are under the oversight of, and follow standards established by, both the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. Being in minimum compliance with these standards is not what makes managing a facility challenging. Our goal at the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center isn't to meet minimum standards, it is to provide the most therapeutic environment possible for our kids.

Establishing quality programming, which provides youth with incentives, rewards positive behavior, eliminates room confinement, makes court, interviews, visits and therapy accessible virtually and in-person, and far exceeding minimum standards for phone calls and visits, takes intrinsic motivation and hard work. Having quality medical care and robust mental health services, cleaning and maintaining the facility, replacing old and institutional furniture, having a top-notch education program which provides year-round instruction and 300 minutes a day of class time with qualified teachers and modern technology, takes invested partners, financial resources and a fundamental belief by all stake holders that the kids we work with are important.

Every legislative session there are bills introduced aimed at juvenile detention reform. This should come as no surprise since we are working with kids and not all facilities share the same approach to working with detained youth. It would be easy and much less expensive for the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center to just meet minimum standards, but that isn't going to move the needle on reducing recidivism, improving the lives of youth, or making our communities safer.

I am grateful to work for an organization that believes that we must make an investment in our youth and I appreciate our contract partners who share our core value that the kids we work with are important and deserve the best treatment available.

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RESIDENT COUNCIL

In October 2022, the JJC formalized a resident council which meets weekly and focuses on improving communication and reducing incidents of violence in the building. The kids are given the opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process and are involved in brainstorming solutions for improving the facility. The council promotes peer mediation and assisting fellow residents with adjusting to the detention environment. The council has been tremendously successful thus far. Below are some of the kids' thoughts on the council:

"I am enjoying the resident council meetings because it makes me feel like I have a voice. It also makes me feel like the superintendent appreciates my opinions. I enjoy being able to speak my mind and tell people my ideas!"

D.A. – Unit 4

"In the resident council we work on ways to make the building better. We talk about things like ways to keep the violence down in the building. We also talk about how much influence we have over our fellow residents. In order to be in the group you have to have shown you are mature or worthy of being in this resident council group. Many people in the building would like to be in this group. But we have a rotation going on with residents every few weeks to come to the resident council group. Our voices get heard more with the resident council group and the staff get their point across to the leaders better with this group. The all-around goal with this group is to let everyone get a better understanding of each other. If every detention center had a resident council group the violence in detention centers would be very low."

M.C. – Unit 4

"I like attending the resident council meetings because I have been to other facilities before and they don't offer opportunities to give your opinions like this! I feel Mr. Davis really likes hearing our opinions and I like how he runs the facility. Well behaved residents get to earn more privileges. If you have good behavior you can earn an iPad to watch movies, commissary every day and staying up until 10:15 PM, also the extended phone calls are nice. The superintendent allows us to suggest other privileges we could earn to help us maintain our CBT level."

Q.B. – Unit 4

FOCUS GROUPS & ORIENTATION MEETINGS

The Kane County Juvenile Justice Center utilizes **focus groups** on a daily basis, twice a day; once on 1st shift and once on 2nd shift. Groups are co-facilitated by youth counselors, teachers, supervisors & residents. Varying topics are discussed for the purpose of addressing thinking errors, improving communication and developing social and coping skills.

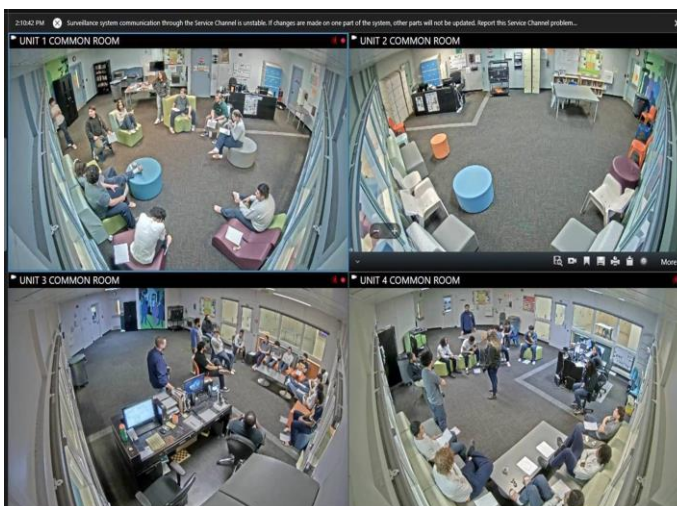
Orientation meetings are conducted individually with each resident who remains detained following their detention hearing. The orientation meetings are co-facilitated by a supervisor and youth counselor. The goal of the initial meeting is to introduce our program, answer any questions the youth may have, brainstorm coping strategies and discuss their feelings regarding detainment and their triggers. Following the initial meeting, a youth counselor advocate will meet with the youth individually every seven days until they are released. The purpose of follow-up meetings is to give the youth an opportunity to build on their coping skills and talk about any concerns they may have.



Mr. Benton, Youth Counselor



Mr. Spears, Youth Counselor



PREA AUDIT

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), is a federal mandate which requires facilities to follow established standards aimed at eliminating sexual abuse and harassment in confinement. PREA requires each facility to undergo a certification audit every three years. Despite PREA being a federal mandate, only a few of the 16 county-operated juvenile detention centers in Illinois are currently PREA certified. Any superintendent whose facility has fully implemented PREA and has undergone a certification audit will tell you that it is extremely challenging, time consuming and expensive. They will also tell you that their facility is much better for having done it and that their kids and staff are safer because of it. From February 22 - 24, 2023, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center underwent our third PREA audit conducted by a certified auditor from the John Howard Association (JHA). The JHA independently monitors correctional facilities, policies and practices and advances reforms needed to achieve a fair, humane and effective criminal justice system. We are grateful to the JHA for partnering with us and agreeing to perform our certification audit.



Mike Davis (JJC Superintendent), Amy Sierra (JJC Assistant Superintendent/PREA Coordinator), Jenny Vollen-Katz (JHA Executive Director), Gwyneth Troyer (JHA Director of Prison Monitoring & Certified PREA Auditor) and Lisa Aust (Kane County Court Services Executive Director)

STAFF WELLNESS



Due to staff shortages throughout the State, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center has been approached by a number of jurisdictions to temporarily house their detained youth. While we empathize with their situation, we have been reluctant to accept kids from jurisdictions other than our contract partners. Being detained is a traumatic event and while it may be necessary at times, we do not believe that shuffling kids from one facility to another is in the best interest of the youth. Further, taking on another detention center's most challenging residents is disruptive to programming and unfair to the kids in our facility, our staff members, and our contract partners. As resident headcount increases, so do crisis situations, physical restraints, worker's compensation claims and call ins. Employees get burned out and turnover follows. Our employees are our most important resource and maintaining our level of care and programming for our kids is dependent upon having a well-trained and committed team. A lot of time and energy is spent training new employees and selecting talented applicants. Being considerate of the needs of employees and doing everything we can to show appreciation and support is not only the right thing to do, but also results in better care of youth. Our staff members are not only exposed to vicarious trauma, they are also subjected to potentially dangerous situations and violence on a daily basis. In March 2023, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center entered into an agreement with Family Counseling Service (FCS) in Aurora to provide mental health support services to our employees. As part of our agreement, FCS will provide debriefings for our employees following especially traumatic events and will conduct a mental health check in with each employee on an annual basis.

FAMILY DAY

On February 26, 2023, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center hosted Family Day. This was something we did pre-pandemic and we were excited to again be able to host the event. We are proud of our facility and team and wanted to give everyone an opportunity to share the good work that they do with their families and loved ones. Our guests were not allowed to see or interact with detained youth and we modified programming to ensure that the kids did not have to spend a significant amount of time in their rooms. We also provided the kids with a special meal and a free commissary item. The purpose and importance of Family Day was discussed with the kids during resident council meetings and focus groups leading up to the event. The kids couldn't have been better behaved during the event and we had a fantastic turnout. We are grateful to have such an invested and talented team.





MENTAL HEALTH NEWS

By Pam Ely, LCPC, with Brittany Hetzel, LCSW



“Behavior is the language of trauma. Children will show you before they tell you that they are in distress.”

This quote resonates with me as mental health professionals at the JJC. I was recently speaking with a boy in detention who had threatened another resident. He told me how annoyed he was by the other resident and the behaviors that “got to him.” However, further discussion revealed the true issue; his mother had surrendered him to DCFS and would not take his calls. He was feeling abandoned and scared. We discussed other sources of support and people he could turn to. We discussed coping skills for his frustration and his inability to sleep at night. All of these issues will be addressed by our mental health team.

Brittany Hetzel and I make up the mental health team at the JJC. Providing additional support are our MSW interns who rotate through the JJC each semester. We conduct intake assessments on each resident, provide group therapy (DBT and Process groups), individual sessions, crisis intervention services and case management. Our days are varied and can involve speaking with DCFS workers, probation officers, parents, counselors, SASS workers and most importantly kids in detention! Forrest is our therapy dog and we are fortunate to have him two days a week. He is extremely popular and loved by the kids in detention. Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Dara Karlov also visits the JJC weekly to provide medication management services. Our weekly staffing meetings with her and Nurse Ashley Montes are a highlight of the week.

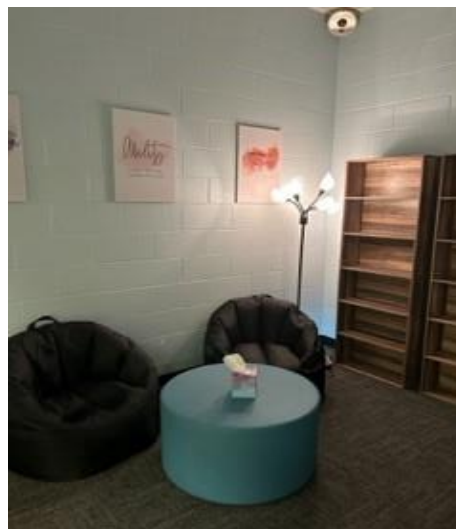
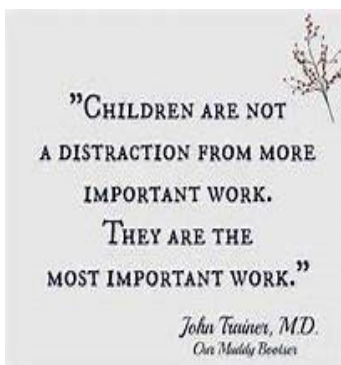
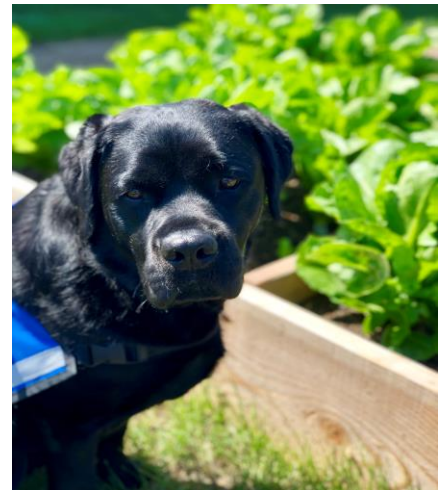
One exciting update is that we have a Mental Health room for us to talk with kids. We turned a large, unused intake cell into a trauma-informed area to speak with kids (see photo below).

Of course, our youth counselors are a critical component of the mental health team. We appreciate their help with identifying issues and concerns regarding the kids.

Please feel free to contact us with any issues or concerns.

Pam: elypam@16thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov

Brittany: hetzelbrittany@16thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov





REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
KANE COUNTY

SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Kane County Juvenile Justice Center partners with the Kane County Regional Office of Education for our education program. Our education program is year round and our kids receive 300 minutes a day of in-person instruction. We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of full-time educators, guest instructors and volunteers.



Ms. Arient, Science Teacher



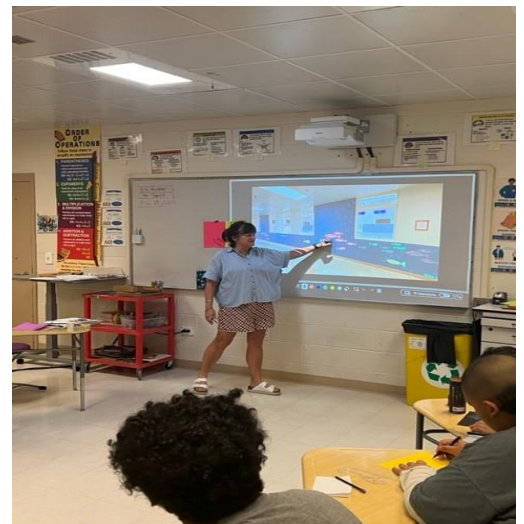
Ms. Wang, English Teacher



Mr. Spalis, JJC Principal



Ms. Liz, Volunteer Tutor



Ms. Tilly, Art Teacher

AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Illinois Probation and Court Services Association



Chris Janovsky, Mike Davis, Jared Weiser, Durin Caplan

Congratulations to Durin Caplan, JJC Supervisor, who was presented the Distinguished Service Award at the Illinois Probation and Court Services Association Fall Conference. The Distinguished Service Award is presented to Court Services professionals who deserve individual recognition for their dedication and commitment to their clients, peers and the community.

Mike Davis, JJC Superintendent, was awarded the Connie Kaiser Justice Award, which is awarded for exemplifying the highest standards in the area of promoting restorative principles, practice and activities for youth in detention.

County Board Recognition



Pam Ely – 20 years

Marcus McGowan – 20 years

Kim Stehlin – 20 years

Durin Caplan – 15 years

Chris Janovsky – 15 years

Shellie Soderdahl – 10 years

Jared Weiser – 10 years



*Back Row: Pam Ely, Shellie Soderdahl, Jamie Loblillo, Madam Chair Corinne Pierog
Front Row: Lisa Aust, Kim Stehlin, Kathy Osborn*



GIVING TUESDAY



Amy Sierra, Mike Davis, David Hunt, Jaymee Goodspeed and Brittany Hetzel

In October 2022, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center Book Club was the recipient of Town House Books and Café's Giving Tuesday. On the first Tuesday of every month, Town House Books and Café selects a different organization to receive 20% of all Giving Tuesday sales. The JJC would like to thank Town House Books and Café and owner David Hunt for their generous donation and support of our kids.

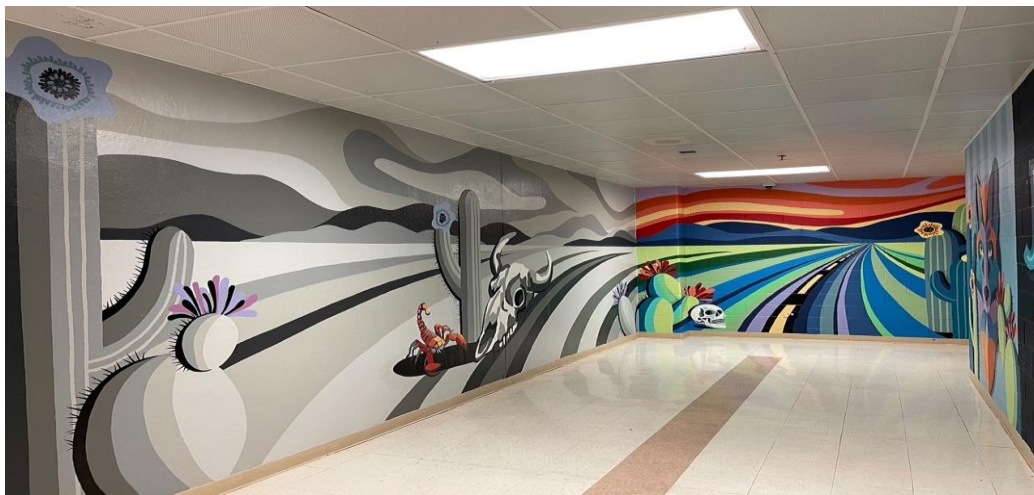
BOOK CLUB



Brandon and Judy

Book club meets every Thursday for one hour. Kids participate on a voluntary basis, but interest and participation in book club has been very well received. Our book club coordinators are impressed by the amount of participation and the kids' willingness to take turns reading out loud. Book club is currently reading Miles Morales' *Spider-Man*. Thank you to our book club volunteers, Brandon & Judy.

ART CLASS

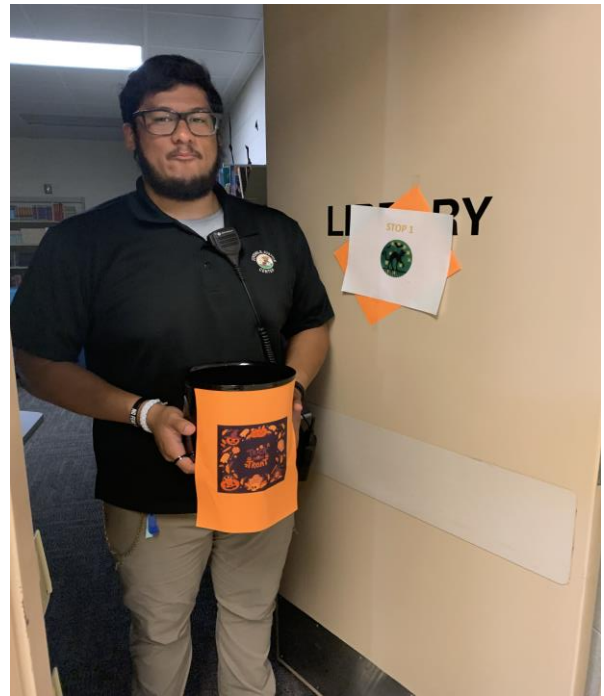


Thank you to Catherine Tilly for the beautiful murals and for always teaching and including the residents in her work.

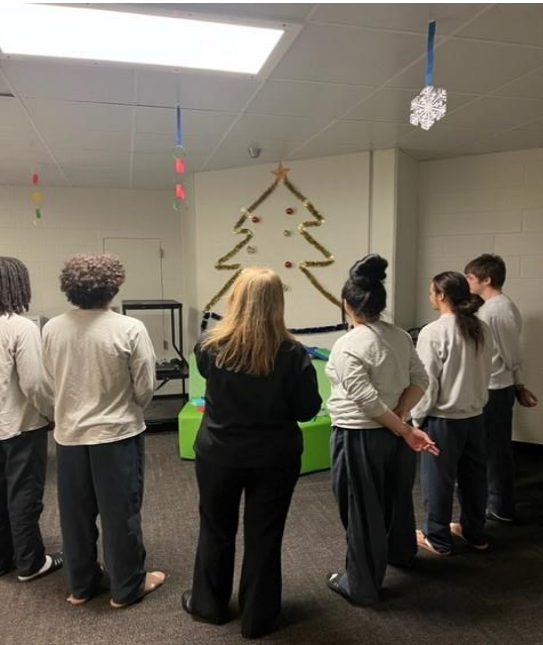
ACTIVITIES



2nd place in Pumpkin Decorating Contest for drawing of Amy Sierra, Mike Davis and Pam Ely



Halloween festivities with Youth Counselors Mr. Zarate (above) & Mr. Gieseler (below).



Kane County Court Services Executive Director Lisa Aust judges the holiday decorating contest. The winning unit received a pizza party.





The kids purchased holiday gifts for loved ones using coupons earned for positive behavior. Thank you to the Kane County Regional Office of Education for sponsoring this event. All gifts purchased were mailed to the kids' families and loved ones.



Youth Counselors Ms. Herrmann and Ms. Bauer preparing snacks for the Saturday evening Plus Party for kids who exhibited positive behavior during the week.



Level 3 Super Bowl Party. The kids enjoyed watching the game and feasting on a large selection of snacks. They also enjoyed playing bags and ping-pong tournaments with the youth counselors and supervisors.