

# KANE COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER



## A Note from the Superintendent

In 2014, the average daily population of the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) was 63 residents. In 2019, the average daily population dropped to 30 residents. Juvenile crime is down overall, but a better understanding of research and a philosophical shift in the approach to working with criminally-involved youth have contributed to the decline. At the same time, the rate of anxiety and depression in children aged 6-17 has increased and those children suffering from anxiety and depression are more likely to have additional disorders and behavioral problems. While our population has decreased, the JJC has seen a dramatic increase in the number of kids in detention with significant mental health disorders. While many could benefit from and should receive inpatient services, there is an inadequate number of beds available. This seems to be especially true for criminally-involved youth. We still see our share of criminal thinkers, but due to the lack of resources, working with kids who are severely cognitively delayed or suffering from serious mental health disorders is the new reality for juvenile detention.

In response to the changing landscape, we have hired two mental health clinicians and continue to contract with a psychiatrist. No longer do we exclusively recruit and hire individuals with law enforcement experience; rather, we seek applicants with diverse backgrounds and education. Regardless of their experience or area of study, we seek individuals who are empathetic, understanding and patient. In the past couple of weeks alone, I have observed our youth counselors kneeling next to and holding hands with an emotionally distraught child and two of them sitting in a youth's room for hours to prevent him from banging his head. Years ago, that sort of behavior by detention staff would have been frowned upon, but as the nature of juvenile detention evolves, so does our team. Time and again, I am impressed by the genuine concern demonstrated by our youth counselors, supervisors, teachers, nurses and mental health clinicians and I sincerely appreciate and thank them. In 2020, we resolve to continue to adapt to change and continue to be creative in our effort to maintain a safe, yet nurturing environment.

To our intergovernmental partners, volunteers, community partners, the Regional Office of Education, the Kane County Sheriff's Office, the Kane County Development Office, Kane County Building Management, the Kane County Board and the Chief Judge's Office, thank you for your support and Happy New Year.

*Mike Davis*

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## Meet Supervisor Whitney La Barbera



Whitney La Barbera was born and raised in Kane County. She currently lives in Elgin with her husband of one year, Gary, and her 10-year-old stepson, Angelo. Whitney graduated from Dundee-Crown High School in 1999 and then received a Bachelors degree in Criminal Justice from Illinois State University. In 2016, Whitney graduated from Lewis University with a Masters degree in Psychology.

Whitney spent 15 years working in the Probation Department of Court Services. She spent the majority of this time working in the Intensive Probation and Sex Offender units until she was promoted to Supervisor in 2015. After working as a Supervisor for several years, she decided to jump entirely out of her comfort zone and accepted a position as a Supervisor at the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center. Whitney considers this to be one of the best decisions she has ever made. She truly loves coming to work and often finds the work rewarding. Aside from the endearing friendships she has made with her co-workers, she finds the job challenging, interesting and at times, entertaining.

Outside of work, Whitney tries to find the humor in anything she can. For example, she met her husband in an incredibly unromantic setting. She was supervising sex offenders on Probation and he was the Detective looking for a non-compliant sex offender on her caseload. In an even funnier twist, the CAC caseworker assigned to the case (and dear friend to Whitney), Pam Ely, was ordained as a minister and married Whitney and Gary in September of 2018.

Whitney enjoys NOT camping, eating at Elgin's finest hot dog stand, "[Beef Villa](#)", reading books from the library (they just smell better), shopping, vacationing every spring with her girlfriends, taking walks with her German Shepherd, Ty, and despite being a rather poor cook...she really enjoys cooking and hopes her skill set will improve with more practice! Whitney would agree that her family and co-workers also hope that more practice in this area will one day make her a better cook. Whitney also loves anything Halloween related and dressed up this year as Guy Fieri, who hosts several shows on The Food Network.

Whitney is most grateful for her family and specifically, her parents. She eats a meal with them every Friday and has done so since childhood. It's a tradition that she and her husband hope to carry on with Angelo. She also is incredibly thankful for her job. Throughout life's ups and downs, her co-workers and superiors have always been some of her biggest cheerleaders and the friendships she has formed are invaluable to her.

Since working at the JJC, Whitney finds that she is drawn most to working with the kids that are in foster care. They often present as challenging, but sometimes are the most appreciative of any sort of kindness that is shown to them. She believes that many of these kids are stronger than most adults she knows.

In 2020, Whitney hopes to expand her family with both children and animals (she is pushing her husband hard for another puppy or three.) Fingers crossed that she gets a baby, or a puppy, or both!

# NEW VISITING HOURS & CONTACT VISITATION

## Kane County Juvenile Justice Center



### New Visiting Hours Effective December 1, 2019

Sunday: 1:00 p.m.— 3:15 p.m. (30 min. increments)

Tuesday: 2:30 p.m.— 3:35 p.m. (30 min. increments)

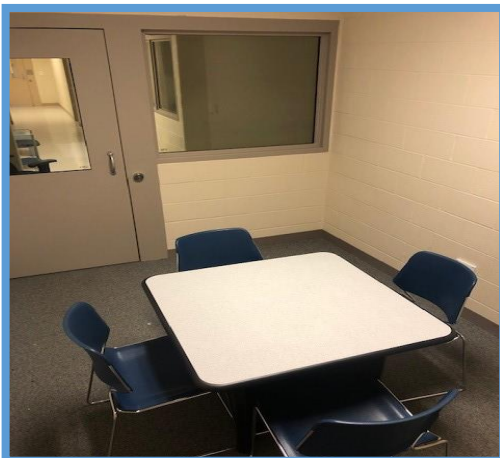
Thursday: 6:00 p.m.— 8:15 p.m. (30 min. increments)

Thanksgiving Day: 1:00 p.m.— 3:15 p.m. (30 min. increments)

Christmas Day: 1:00 p.m.— 3:15 p.m. (30 min. increments)

**Please call 630-406-7480 to schedule a visitation time.**

In addition to our contact visitation rooms, we have removed the glass partitions from several of our visitation cubicles. While a counter remains between the kids and their parents, it still affords them the opportunity to hold hands and embrace. This was the most cost effective way for us to expand contact visits, while still maintaining security. We have also expanded the number of opportunities for visits.



Thank you to the Kane County Regional Office of Education for applying for the federal Title I Grant, and purchasing new furniture for the Library and classrooms. Thank you also to Brandon, our volunteer, and Halle and Ellen from the Law Library for all of their support and creativity throughout the year.



**Library**



**Multipurpose**

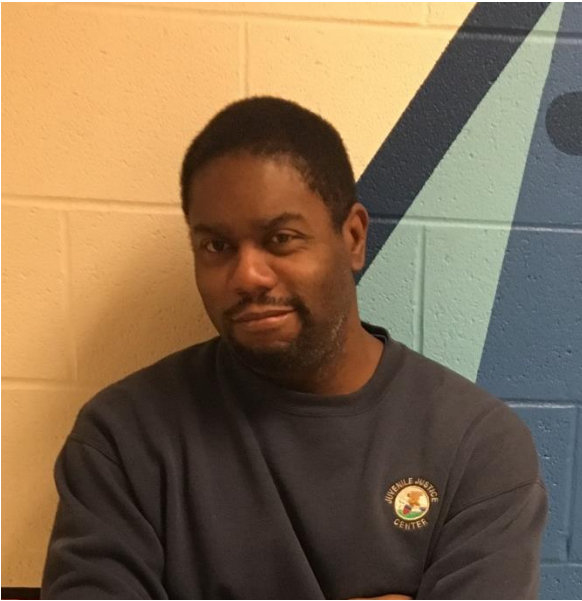


**Room**



**Classroom**





## Meet Senior Youth Counselor Marcus McGowan

I am rapidly approaching my 17<sup>th</sup> year as a Kane County Court Services employee, and it has been an interesting journey, to say the least. I am originally from Aurora, IL, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 children. I was born partially deaf, and as such, my speech was delayed. My hearing was eventually restored through surgery, but at the time, my parents could not afford to send me to a speech pathologist, so even now, I really don't talk all that well. Despite that, I still graduated from Aurora University with undergraduate degrees in both Criminal Justice and Sociology, and in 2005, I earned my MSW. In 2006, I joined the AU staff as an adjunct professor, and I have been there ever since.

I have been fortunate to hold a variety of different jobs during my professional career, ranging from drug rehab counselor, to private investigator, to speechwriter. These jobs have allowed me to travel across the country and see interesting parts of the world, even if it wasn't always under the best circumstances.

I love automobiles, so when I am away from work and the weather is nice, you can usually find me attending car shows or cruise nights. I find the atmosphere relaxing and I have a personal list of 10 cars that I would like to own someday. So far, I have been lucky enough to check 3 off that vaunted list. I may not reach all 10, but it won't be for a lack of trying. I am a practicing martial artist and I am currently recognized as a black belt in 4 different systems. I like the training and the warriorship that comes along with it, but it's the spirit of competition that actually drives me, even though it can be a difficult (painful) job sometimes!

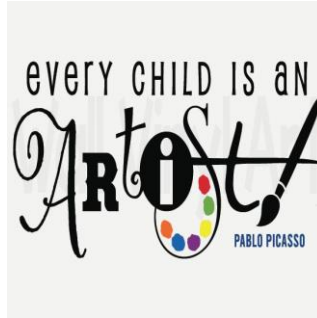
My other hobby is writing, and I have published 3 books with another one set to be released during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020. I enjoy putting my thoughts to paper and telling intricate stories, but I am not the most disciplined writer (I write in spurts) and it drives my editor nuts. I have recently branched out to writing comic books, but while the process is enjoyable, it is proving to be more challenging than I originally thought.

All in all, I try to live life as though every day is a gift, even with all the setbacks that naturally occur. We were not meant to remain stagnant. We have to keep moving.



### Giving Tuesday

Thank you to Town House Books and Café for donating 20% of their bookstore and café sales to the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center's Book Club as their September 3<sup>rd</sup> Giving Tuesday recipients. The JJC Book Club received \$364.92 from the event.



For the past year, Catherine Tilly and her daughters, Olivia and Lucy, have been designing and painting murals throughout the JJC, bringing color and scale to the space. Believing that art can be used to “elevate the conversation.” The team feels privileged to #workbeyondthewalls building relationships with staff and residents. Catherine has more than 30 years of experience as a designer, painter and art director.

Eliska Kostelny has been admitted to the Masters in Art Therapy program at Adler University. She is serving her internship at the JJC and is working on social justice art projects with the residents.



Beautiful ceramic pumpkins made with the help of our volunteer, John Lo.

# Murals



## JJC Family Day



The JJC hosted a Friends and Family day on August 25, 2019. Friends and Family day allows the JJC team an opportunity to have their loved ones tour the facility and gain a better understanding of the job we do. The kids are moved out of one of our units for a couple of hours that day in order to maintain confidentiality, and no visitors are allowed near the kids. This is something we've done a couple of times in the past and it's been well received. We appreciate the interest shown by all of the families and loved ones who toured; we only wish we would have gotten pictures of everyone.



## Meet Mental Health Clinician Samantha Miemczewski

Sam Miemczewski, LCPC, is one of our new Mental Health Clinicians at the JJC. Sam graduated from Marquette University with her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She then went on to obtain her Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology Counseling Practice from Roosevelt University. She began her career as a Residential Case Worker at Ecker Center in Elgin and quickly developed a passion for working with the most vulnerable individuals with mental illness. From there, Sam went on to work in various settings, such as Partial-Hospitalization Programs, Group Homes, Psychosocial Rehabilitations, Permanent Supportive Housing, Community Mental Health Outpatient, and Transitional Living Programs. Sam went on to become the Director of Community Supports at a non-profit organization before coming to work at Kane County. She is excited to be starting a new journey at the JJC!



Thank you Judge Susan Clancy-Boles for your leadership and support during your term as Chief Judge of the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. Welcome Chief Judge Clint Hull, we look forward to working with you and wish you both the best of luck.



## Thank You from a Resident

To Supervisors and Staff ♥

*I wanted to say thank you. This experience has been very eye opening for me! even though the circumstances i tried to make the best of my stay here. the staff here has been very supportive and encouraging they look past of why you are here and try to help you no matter what! I have messed up a lot in my life already and nothing has seemed to help me until i got here. eye opening that i actually have it great on the outside than other kids. this is not who im suppose to be! im not giving my best potential that i can be. and all im doing is showing people the wrong side! Thank you so much and hopefully you see me on the other side doing great things thanks again!*

Sincerely, E. A.



Each year, the City of St. Charles hosts a Scarecrow Festival and for the past couple of years, the JJC has submitted an entry. Our artistic youth counselors enjoy working on it as much as the kids and it's nice to have them working side by side on the project. Special thanks to Youth Counselors Herrmann, Blahut and Hillman.



Each holiday season, the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center hosts a party for our kids. It's an opportunity for us to show them that people in the system and community care about and are invested in them. Thank you to all who attended.



*Wishing you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!*