

# LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

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## Cooking Up New Ideas

Programs in Detention

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On Saturday, October 1st, there was a different smell drifting through the Lewis County Detention Center. This smell was savory and warm much like what you might experience when you settle around your dinner table to a home cooked meal. What was the source of this pleasant change?

Detention Supervisor Kenny Miller and detention staff started Saturday morning with all the youth by demonstrating how to make chicken noodle soup from scratch in a crock pot. All the youth helped out and added ingredients to the pot while Kenny talked about the process of cooking the chicken and why it takes so long to cook. While the chicken was cooking, Detention Officer Kristi Heckelsberg facilitated a military style work out program with the youth that consisted of push ups, flutter kicks, planks, mountain climbers, bicycle sit ups, jumping jacks, stretches, ski jumps, crunches, and squats. Imagine the healthy appetite that was being ignited.

Later that day, Kenny had the level 3 youth come into one of the classrooms to show him how to shred the chicken and add the noodles to the pot. Then after the meal was ready, Kenny had the youth learn how to make biscuits in the air fryer. Staff served the youth their meals and they all ate out in A-pod.

Many, if not most, of the youth in detention on a daily basis lack skills and resources to cook a meal. More so, they lack the ability to be in a present state of mind because they are always having to plan for what life is going to throw at them next and how they are going to get their basic needs met. It is more than creating a pleasant rehabilitative environment for youth in detention. "Preparing a meal together can raise self-esteem and confidence for all involved by the development of a new skill and accomplishing a task with a reward. Provides a means to Practice Mindfulness. Cooking can offer a therapeutic way to be engaged and focused on the present," Becca Rick, MS, RD. Life and social skills training consists of instruction, feedback, modeling, behavior rehearsal, social reinforcement, and discipline.

# Prosocial Outings



This previous Fall, Lewis County Juvenile Court staff members Lee Montgomery, Seth Foster, Rickie Anders and Elyssa Smiley brought 7 youth to Schilter's Family Farm in Olympia. In partnership with Guardian Friends of Lewis County, each youth was given \$30 to participate in festival activities. There was a catch though. Each youth had to purchase a pumpkin large enough to carve, had to purchase one item from a vendor and could not keep any of the remaining change. The youth learned how to budget their money and how to maximize what they had left by combining the change to purchase kettle corn for the drive home. Once each youth purchased their pumpkin, staff gave the youth little guidance on how to use the remainder. To our surprise, every youth used their remaining money to either buy a gift for their parent or used their money to purchase a food item to share with their family. One youth purchased a soup mug for his mother and then used what he had left to buy a piece of fudge. The farm had a deal on fudge too. If you purchased a pound of fudge, you got half a pound of fudge for free. A few of the youth figured out that if they worked together, they could split the 6 pieces of fudge and still have money left over; some youth did not figure this out but realized it a little too late. Again, each youth who purchased a square of fudge, purchased each piece with a family member in mind.

After the pumpkin patch, staff brought the youth to Alexander Park in Chehalis to have lunch and to carve their pumpkins. While discussing the day, one of the youth said they had a really great time. She expressed that it was different but nice to be able to actually participate in activities and purchase items like other people do. She shared that she has gone to pumpkin patches with her family before but that they don't have money so they don't get to really have the experience.

Since it is oh so dreary outside, the fun has continued in doors at the Par4 Sports complex. The Juvenile Court has their second outing scheduled there this next week!

## Probation “Meet the Team”

Most of the focus in the newsletters has been on the “other” moving parts of the Juvenile Court since the average Joe already knows that Juvenile Probation is a big piece of the Juvenile Court. What Joe doesn’t know is that there are many moving parts and programs within the Probation Department. Without further ado, let me introduce you to the Probation team!

Jennifer Walker– Jen has been with the court for a long time and is a Probation Officer 2. Jen currently supervises Moderate to High risk youth in the Chehalis School District and also is a familiar face in Truancy and At Risk Youth Court. Jen supervised the Centralia caseload for many years and has become a point of contact for law enforcement all over the state because of her historical knowledge on juvenile trends. Her experience and wisdom is truly irreplaceable but she is set for retirement in 2024.

Dean Durant “Aka DAD”- Dean has also been with the court for a significant amount of time and is a Probation Officer 2. Dean is best known for creating and supervising a very successful Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA) program. The SSODA program allows youth who have been convicted of specific sex offenses to be supervised and treated while remaining in the community. These youth are evaluated by a Sex Offender therapist to determine their risk level and likelihood of rehabilitation. Dean always goes above and beyond to help these youth and families become functional participants in the community.

Lee Montgomery– Lee is the heart of the team and a Probation Officer 2. To say he is a people person is probably an understatement. Lee was with the Juvenile Court for many years and then left for a period of time to be a missionary. Since his return to the Juvenile Court 10 years ago, Lee has supervised caseloads, monitored diversion cases and is currently in charge of the Employment Education Training program (EET), Coordination of Services program (COS), and Early Prevention Empowerment Program (EPEP). Lee has been the driving force and creator of the new Lewis County Youth Mentorship Program which will roll out this year.

Paul Wirkkala– Paul has been with the Juvenile Court since 2014 and is currently supervising caseloads essentially all over Lewis County. His primary caseload has been moderate and high risk youth on the East end of the county but he is transitioning to the Chehalis caseload. Paul brings a unique calm demeanor to probation. The youth on his caseload quickly realize that they do not have to work against him; he is there working and supporting them.

Jay Nedry– Jay came to the Lewis County Juvenile Court in 2016 from Spokane County Juvenile Court. He has years of experience working in detention and high stress environments. Jay currently supervises the moderate and high risk caseload in Centralia but is transitioning to supervise the East county youth. Jay is a “matter of fact” straightforward kind of guy who really focuses on teaching youth accountability but at the same time, balances compassion.

Dulce Cabrera– Dulce has become the “jack-of-all-trades” Probation Officer. She has been with the court since 2016. When she first worked for the Juvenile Court, she was one of the legal assistance but quickly moved to Probation. She essentially has done it all with the exception of a SSODA and EET in a very short period of time. Dulce is bilingual and has helped create forms in Spanish as well as interpret for other staff members. She currently supervises youth who are low risk, diversion cases, and the Individualized Treatment Court (ITC).

## Probation “Meet the Team”

### Continued

Megan Shepherd– Megan has been with the court since 2017. Prior to working for the Juvenile Court, Megan was a volunteer for the Guardian ad Litem Program. She was an outstanding GAL and brought all of her skills and passion over to the probation department. Megan is best known for bringing transformation to the Truancy program. What once was “That’s how its always been done” became “Lets do it better.” If a youth was not going to school, Megan wanted to know why and more so, how to change that.

Seth Foster– Seth started working for the Juvenile Court in 2014 as a Detention Officer. Over the years he became a Detention Supervisor, as well as a Defensive Tactics Instructor. Seth became a Probation Officer in 2019 and is the Court Officer. The role of the Court Officer is to represent the Probation Department in court and to supervise the cases in court that are still pending. Seth is also the backup Probation Officer for the Individualized Treatment Court as well as the Probation Officer that oversees the Prosocial Outings Program. He has done an amazing job creating a program that entices youth with fun experiences yet teaches them life skills. In the near future, Seth will be supervising moderate and high risk youth in Centralia.

There are many moving pieces to being a Probation Officer that seemingly change nearly every year due to legislative changes. When a youth has allegedly committed a crime, the case is either diverted away from the court system and handled by the Diversion Unit (Dulce) or they are formally charged by the Prosecutor’s Office and go through court (Seth). The Diversion Unit reviews the offense with the youth and family to allow the youth to take responsibility for their actions by agreeing to remedy the situation with community service, assessments, and/or treatment. If the youth completes the agreed contract, their case is done; if not, the Prosecutor may file formal charges.

When a youth goes through court, the Probation Department discusses the case as a group to come up with a recommendation to the court as to what the court should order (i.e. community supervision, detention, community service, etc.) After the Judicial Officer hears all sides and a youth is placed on a court order that includes community supervision, the youth is assigned a Probation Officer. Probation Officers are trained in assessing the risk level of a youth and implementing case plans to address the criminogenic needs (the area that needs targeted in order to impact the youth’s criminal behavior). The Probation Officer supervises the court ordered requirements/restrictions for compliance. In addition to making sure the youth complies with the court order, the Probation Officer responds to the criminogenic needs by making appropriate referrals to services such as mental health counseling, substance use counseling, sex offender treatment, family counseling, EET, COS and more.

## Detention and Court Employee of the Year!

In 2018, the Lewis County Juvenile Court instituted its' first ever employee recognition program. The purpose was to provide a forum for our most outstanding performers to be nominated by their peers and officially recognized in a longstanding and meaningful way. Those employees nominated were done so based upon their contributions to the creation of an excellent work culture, going above and beyond in the performance of their duties, and their initiative in pursuing ways to improve the court overall.

### This year's Detention Officer of the Year was Detention Supervisor Kenneth Miller .



Judge Lawler presenting  
Kenny his award

*I am nominating a person who in the last year and a half as a Supervisor has really stepped in and stepped up as a leader. He has really shown that he can problem solve, has integrity, he is easy to be around and brings a positive, easygoing climate to the Detention atmosphere. He is approachable to his team and he is never afraid to ask questions and make sure he is doing the right thing. He knows when things need brought to the attention of others and steps up often when others do not. He has shown great leadership skills and has built, motivated and lead his team into doing some great things, exceeding expectations with programming and improving the "Look" of detention as far as how we are interacting with the youth.*

### This year's Court Service Employee of the Year was GAL Coordinator Christine Dickinson

*I would like to nominate Christine Dickinson for the 2022 Employee of the Year in Legal Services Award. Christine exemplifies what it means to be a rock star employee; she is an incredible asset to our team!*

*Christine was working at the court as a Legal Assistant for the majority of 2021. When the GAL Program was down one employee in August, she applied for the job of GAL Program Coordinator and was selected to partner and learn from Janeal. It was the intention that she would learn all of the nuances of the program and form a solid team to grow the program. She started her new role in October of 2021 and two months after starting, Janeal announced she needed to retire early and would be with us only thru the end of the year.*



Judge Toynbee presenting  
Christine her award

# Farewell Commissioner Mitchell



Commissioner Tracy Mitchell  
retired in December 2022

From all the staff at the Lewis County Juvenile Court  
It was an honor to work with you for the past 24 years.

Photo Credit: Nic Scott Lewis County Public Information Specialist