

# ***Let the Games Begin***

by Matt Jenkins, Communications Officer

North Carolina's juvenile justice system is a strong proponent for using a therapeutic model of correction rather than punitive measures, something you understand if you've ever heard Deputy Secretary for Juvenile Justice, William Lassiter, speak on the topic. A couple of months back, we shared a piece in "On the Scene Magazine" entitled Measuring Success, which shared a couple of notable success stories for some of the students within our youth development centers. Sharing successes offers positive validation for the methods we use to nurture kids and impact lives. Our goal is to lower recidivism by helping kids benefit from every opportunity available to them. So it's important to note there are also success stories [about youth] within our system of care who will never have the experience of a YDC.



Working with at-risk youth, the use of diversion as an alternative to commitment occurs on a regular basis here in North Carolina. Programs sponsored by local or county organizations provide opportunities for enriching lives and quite often put children onto a positive path without them ever becoming part of the committed population. The kids who are engaged with juvenile justice in this capacity are held accountable, with measurable milestones to accomplish along the way. Today's story is the result of realized successes on the way to the end goal.

District 28 Chief Court Counselor Sylvia Clement and her staff celebrated and acknowledged the efforts of the [Buncombe County] youth in their programs, by hosting a day of rewards for juveniles graduating from diversion and/or probation. Clement's team recently provided lunch and an afternoon outing to the Fun Depot for compliance, positive outcomes and staying on-track with their progression. The afternoon quickly evolved into a fun (but fierce) competition between the youth and court counselors Aldwin Lance, Shaketria Lindsey and Kim Roland.

Whether it was bowling, rock climbing, racing cars or video games, the kids sought to triumph over each court counselor in every activity. They zealously claimed victory on the day, however, the court counselors contend they let the kids win. Perhaps we'll never know the truth, but "winning" was the

motivational theme this outing was centered on... and there is certainly nothing wrong with a little healthy competition. Winning at life starts with having a winning attitude - is given a chance by making winning choices in life – and yields results when those choices are followed through. These graduates have taken a major first step by making good choices, and following them through to complete their programs. Now they carry a winning attitude to guide them into the next phase of life.

