

2013
Virginia Juvenile Justice Association
Meritorious Award in the Area of Court Services
JOHANNA BALASCIO

Our award winner in the area of court services began her career with the Court in 1995 as an Intern just days after the birth of her daughter. She was hired by Outreach and steadily moved through the ranks of the court system-working as a Probation Officer, Emergency Services Probation Officer, and Quality Assurance/Volunteer Coordinator. Eager to get back to working directly with kids, she accepted the position of Probation Supervisor where she works today. She had a vision, a vision of how probation should be approached and she has implemented that vision. It's a vision that includes clients treated with respect, informal sanctions exhausted before formal Court action, and focusing on finding appropriate services for juveniles and families. Her vision also includes treating staff fairly and objectively, and actively managing but also allowing room for worker autonomy. Our recipient is said to have exceptional supervisory and leadership skills, and described as kind, patient, and an exceptional teacher.

For the past two years, our recipient and her staff have hosted a Community Outreach Day for their clients and families. Our recipient described it as a great opportunity to engage families and for staff to spend quality time with their clients and families. It was also an opportunity to allow probation clients to see their probation officers in a different setting, and what a better way to do this than by breaking bread with one another. Our recipient stated that it was a time to remind us of the impact we can have. She continued that we can all get lost in the daily grind and these moments are the ones that remind us of our mission and the meaning behind our jobs. Last year, the female PO's dominated a basketball game. This year they all danced to Michael Jackson and other videos provided by a Game Truck. A passerby walking home from a nearby bus stop couldn't avoid dancing along with them!

Our winner is quick to embrace the philosophies of her Court. In her court she specifically assisted with the implementation of Motivation Interviewing and a new risk assessment instrument and companion approach providing on-site coaching to every unit of the court. Because of her efforts, there has been a change in the overall focus of probation.

Our recipient is said to have a way of always making people feel welcome. She is first to volunteer for new projects and can counted on to follow through with all tasks. She is said to be reliable, dependable, a first-rate employee and a great role model for her staff.

Previously our recipient was awarded an Outstanding Performance Award from the County of Fairfax. She has been a long-standing member of the Court's Gender Specific Programming Committee, and eventually took a leadership role to ensure that the goals of the committee were accomplished. Because our recipient is task focused and very organized, all meetings run smoothly and goals are accomplished.

Our recipient is a graduate of George Mason University with a degree in Social Work. She is a resident of Manassas where she lives with her husband and two daughters. Her oldest daughter attends Northern Virginia Community College and her youngest daughter just started Kindergarten.