

DJJ NEWS



Bon Air JCC Hosts Human Trafficking Symposium

The reality of human trafficking was brought home during a symposium held Jan. 30 at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center. Selected male residents, facility staff and other stakeholders learned about the issue firsthand from Tanya Gould, director of the Anti-Human Trafficking division of the Virginia Attorney General's Office, who shared her own story of surviving domestic sex trafficking.

Gould, who experienced sexual abuse growing up and was a teenager when she met and was coerced by her trafficker, engaged the youth in attendance with candid discussion and inspiring words.



“Understand who you are. Stop the performing, heal, deal with your stuff as it comes up ... Anything that happens to you, you don’t have to accept that,” she said. “Talk with someone you trust. Sometimes you start living and making decisions out of what happened to you, and that’s not you.”

The event was a collaboration with nonprofit organization ImPACT Virginia and the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, which offers a human trafficking elective for fourth-year medical students. The students’ advocacy work as part of the course includes educating justice-involved youth, who are among those most vulnerable to trafficking.

