

DJJ NEWS



CPP Program Ignites Interest in Welding

Four youth placed in DJJ's Community Placement Program at Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Staunton recently received certifications in welding, sparking interest in continuing their education in the skilled trade.

Over the course of eight weeks, the juveniles gathered in the center's outdoor rec yard, where they received hands-on instruction from Wiley Perry, a welding and machining program manager at Blue Ridge Community College, using both

a simulator and portable oxyacetylene welding equipment. The class met two days a week for several hours in the evenings so as not to interfere with their other scheduled programs.

"Welding is a very equal playing field – it doesn't matter what size you are," Perry said. "These young men were able to come together as a team. They helped each other and showed they have the skills to be successful."



SVJC Executive Director Tim Showalter said he was impressed by what the center's first such welding class was able to achieve and hopes to be able to expand and extend the learning opportunities offsite as well as onsite.

The students' accomplishments were celebrated with a certificate-presentation ceremony and refreshments. Among those in attendance were several probation officers, who held up a poster and heartily cheered for the youth from their court service unit.

Dr. Courtney Anderson, the center's vocational specialist, said the occasion was a testament to the young people whose hard work and dedication made

it possible for them to complete the course. "This is a skill the kids can take with them," he said.

Over iced tea and chocolate chip cookies, the youth reflected on their experiences.

"It was difficult at first, but when I started to get the hang of it, it became easier," one student said. "I like it. It's useful, and there's good money in it."

Another said learning to weld came easy for him and that he took pride in assisting his peers. "I saw my fellow students accomplish something they wanted," he said. "It made me feel good to be able to help others."

