



NEWS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AND R.E.B. FOUNDATION HONOR DJJ QUILTING INSTRUCTOR ROY MITCHELL FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Richmond, VA, Nov. 9 – Roy Mitchell, who began teaching the art of quilting to residents at the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice’s (DJJ) Yvonne B. Miller High School on the campus of the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center eight years ago, is one of 31 instructors in the Richmond metro area and surrounding counties of Chesterfield, Henrico and Hanover recognized in 2020 by the Community Foundation and the R.E.B. Foundation for teaching excellence.



“When people were skeptical that an incarcerated youth, especially a young man, could be interested in the ‘old ladies’ art of quilting, Mr. Mitchell sought to prove them wrong,” said DJJ Director Valerie Boykin. “His quilting program is now so popular that students must interview to gain acceptance. Dozens of young men have learned a skill that requires teamwork, creativity and patience from a man who believes in them and has played a significant role in helping to rehabilitate them.”

Mitchell fell in love with the art of quilting after seeing a display of quilts at a county fair. Deciding he could create quilts every bit as beautiful as the ones he saw there, he has since devoted himself to the craft and become one of the nation’s premier quiltmakers. He now teaches the art to students who never dreamed they would be interested in quilting and who become immediate devotees when they realize they are capable of creating beauty, along with experiencing a profound sense of accomplishment in the process.

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“When students enter my classroom, the first thing they see is a sign that says, ‘You Are Somebody,’” Mitchell says. “My students take this to heart. In my eight years at Bon Air, I’ve never had a single disciplinary issue.”

“A teacher like Mr. Mitchell who teaches from the heart, is like the sun sustained by its core,” says one of his enthusiastic students. “He radiates love, burns with passion, and nurtures through his warmth.”

Considered among the best in their field, instructors honored by the Community Foundation and the R.E.B. Foundation demonstrate a sincere passion for teaching while also serving as mentors, coaches and champions for their students. They were selected from 109 nominees submitted by students, parents and colleagues. The R.E.B. Awards provide opportunities for area public school teachers to continue their own love of learning as they pursue adventures of a lifetime.

Mr. Mitchell will use his \$11,200 share of the nearly \$200,000 in grant funds to learn more about Kente Cloth and the similarities in culture between African American and Hispanic students through travel to Ghana.

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