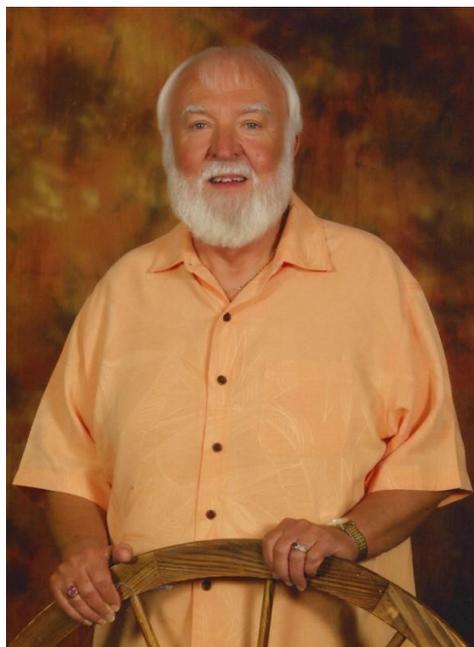


Charly Skaggs

President – National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA)

1988-1990



Mr. Skaggs spent his entire career serving the youth of Texas involved in the juvenile justice system starting out as a house parent. Mr. Skaggs was also a court and field probation officer and the administrator of an emergency shelter. At that point, Mr. Skaggs took over running the detention center in Fort Worth Texas, following his friend and colleague Dr. Mel Brown. In 1998 Mr. Skaggs became the Chief Probation Officer for Williamson County, TX, a position he held until his retirement in 2010.

Mr. Skaggs's initial involvement in NJDA came when the Texas Juvenile Detention Association asked him to represent them at an NJDA conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Skaggs stated that he had one job at that conference, to negotiate an agreement on behalf of the Texas organization with NJDA to hold the next NJDA conference in Texas. Since initial planning had already started, what they really wanted was for him to negotiate a good financial deal for the Texas association. Charly laughed and thought that he must have succeeded because as he was getting ready to leave the conference, NJDA leadership approached him about running for office in the national organization. He said yes, and the following year, in Savannah, Georgia, when the current president-elect was unable to move into his presidential duties, Charly became president of NJDA.

When Mr. Skaggs took over as president, there were only ten states represented in the membership of NJDA. Mr. Skaggs made it his goal to have every state represented. He personally contacted, either by phone or letter, a representative from every state, asking them to identify for him a leader in juvenile justice. He then cold contacted every one of these people, explaining what the organization needed, that someone in their state had identified them as being a leader in their state in juvenile justice issues, and asking if they would be willing to fulfil this role. Mr. Skaggs believes that the efforts paid off, remembering one board meeting where they had representation from all fifty states – even Alaska and Hawaii.

Although there were important issues facing facilities on the national level, specifically crowding in facilities, inconsistent standards of care, and the professionalism of being a detention officer, Mr. Skaggs felt strongly that his

focus needed to be the solvency of the NJDA organization. It was a time where the organization had little money and didn't have federal grant support. Mr. Skaggs worked to make the organization a valuable place for practitioners to come. He didn't want them to just come once, but needed them to keep coming back. He wanted the people to get involved in the organization to the point that they could actually make a difference in the lives of the youth that they served.

Juvenile detention as a field has made several advancements since Mr. Skaggs's presidency. Training officers and creating officer training that is specific to their needs has greatly improved. Most states and jurisdictions now have standards as a way to address conditions of confinement. When he was president, there were a lot of states that did not have standards specific to juvenile detention. Detention as a profession is much more acceptable. More so, staff see their positions in detention as their career, as opposed to a stepping stone to something else in juvenile or adult corrections. Most importantly, juvenile justice seems to be showing more caring and compassion instead of discipline and punishment.

Mr. Skaggs didn't really know what the future looked like for NJDA/NPJS. He stated, once you retire and give your thirty-plus years, you hope that you made an impact, you don't necessarily know what the young people who follow you are doing or thinking. You hope that it is involvement and inclusiveness and that they want to see the organization succeed like I did.

Some final thoughts from Mr. Skaggs . . .

For something that I never intended to do, i.e. I thought I was just going to a meeting, NJDA turned out to be one of those bright, shining stars, one of the most important things in my career. The people met, the training I had the opportunities to do because I was president of NJDA, the life-long friendships that I made wouldn't ever have happened if I had stayed isolated in my county or state, or if NJDA had not been willing to take a chance on an unknown Texan. I believe in divine intervention. I believe in this shining star in my life.