

Wayne Liddell

President – National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA)

1994-1996



Wayne Liddell enjoying time with his grandson.

Wayne Liddell started his career in 1974 after graduating from the University of Illinois with a criminal justice degree. He wanted to be a police officer, but had a hard time getting a position, so he decided to apply for a job in the state of Washington in a juvenile rehabilitation facility. Out of pure chance he got involved in juvenile justice in 1974 and this is where he got started working with youth. Mr. Liddell says that he realized that he loved working with kids. Mr. Liddell worked in that facility for three and a half years. Mr. Liddell then was accepted into graduate school at Michigan State University where he received his master's degree in Criminal Justice. While finishing up his thesis, he obtained a job at a private residential facility for juveniles called Highfields Inc. Mr. Liddell worked there for about three years. He then had the opportunity to move to Berrien County Michigan where he was hired to supervise the detention unit at the Berrien County Juvenile Center that had both a detention unit and a residential treatment program. Mr. Liddell started in 1982 and stayed there until he retired in 2006. Mr. Liddell started there as a supervisor and worked his way up to assistant director, associate director, and then became the director in 1990.

While Mr. Liddell was director of the juvenile center, he did a lot of training and consulting in the field. As a way to supplement his pension, Mr. Liddell started his own consultant firm, Wayne R. Liddell and Associates, LLC. He was involved in doing some work with Earl Dunlap, David Roush, and Carol Cramer Brooks, specifically working on the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center's Reform Project in the Chicago facility. Mr. Liddell worked with this consulting team from 2008 until 2013; focusing on helping the agency develop the facility's policy and procedure manual. He also helped with the development of the Cognitive Behavior Training (CBT) behavior management program, staffing initiatives, and other programing. Since Mr. Liddell started his career he has wanted juvenile detention to be more helpful than punitive. He has tried to help youth who had been in trouble learn a different way of thinking and therefore a different way of behaving resulting in receiving better consequences in their life.

In 2014, Mr. Liddell attended the Department of Justice Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) auditor training class in Kansas City. He then became certified as a PREA Auditor for Juvenile Facilities. Mr. Liddell has conducted PREA audits and has helped different jurisdictions prepare for their audits. As a member of the NJDA/NPJS Standards Committee he was also involved in the development of the PREA standards. Mr. Liddell stated that now he is starting to wind down a little bit with his consulting work, becoming a little more retired than self-employed. He works when he wants to work and chills out when he wants to chill out. He does not want to give it totally up because he still enjoys going out and working with different facilities and meeting with his colleagues and friends every year at the NPJS Juvenile Justice Symposium. Mr. Liddell thinks it is important to network with colleagues, and establish friendships and mentorships in the field. Mr. Liddell feels that he has been blessed with having some great mentors in his career such as Dave Roush, Earl Dunlap, Mel Brown, Chuck Kehoe, and his former supervisor, Don Mead, stating, "these guys have been instrumental in helping me along the way."

Mr. Liddell was involved with the Michigan Juvenile Detention Association since 1983, but had not attended any NJDA functions until 1988 at the Annual Conference in Chicago where he and Dave Roush did a Train the Trainer workshop sponsored by the American Correctional Association. There Mr. Liddell met Charly Skaggs, Rayetta Grimm, Dana Menard, and Tom Stokes along with some other folks who welcomed him in, informing him that NJDA was a great organization comprised of committed professionals. So, he jumped on board and has been a member ever since. He ran for a couple of offices in the Association including first vice-president, and then for president in 1994. He won the election and served as NJDA President from 1994 until 1996.

After becoming President of National Juvenile Detention Association, one of Mr. Liddell's major goals toward advancing the Mission and Purpose of the Association was to basically spread the word that juvenile detention can be an opportunity for youth to make some changes and improve their lives. The goal was to actually consolidate all the energy with the staff, supervisors, directors and members of NJDA to focus on helping youth work through their behaviors and to also develop quality training programs for staff so that facilities are focusing on developing and supporting the staff who serve the youth. That was his overall mission at the time. During his tenure, The NJDA really had a lot of positive federal support, financially and otherwise from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In the late eighties and nineties there was a considerable amount of funding available for staff development and program development in the juvenile detention field designed to help facilities improve the services provided to youth. Mr. Liddell really wanted to see that funding sustained, but unfortunately during the early 2000's federal funding for the juvenile detention field basically dried up. This caused the field to lose a lot of opportunities to obtain quality training on the national level.

As President of the National Juvenile Detention Association the most critical issues on the national level that needed the most attention from the Association were problems with overcrowding in many juvenile detention facilities beginning in the late eighties and actually going into Mr. Liddell's term and then past his term into the late nineties. Juvenile detention facilities were chronically and acutely overcrowded. As a result, issues related to conditions of confinement frequently occurred and included: increase in disturbances, safety and security breaches, staff shortages and the inability to run effective programs. Mr. Liddell stated that not only was this a critical issue nationally, but also in his own work environment in Berrien County. His facility was routinely overcrowded. Overcrowding was causing a lot of problems for many administrators and staff who had to work the floor during those potentially explosive times. When facilities had way too many youth and not enough staff, it was just a terrible time in juvenile detention. Recently, crowding has not been nearly the issue as it had been back in the eighties and nineties. That was one of the real challenges that happened during his tenure; how do facilities continue to strive towards providing quality programming while they are faced with obstacles of crowding and explosive environments? Mr. Liddell thinks one of the things that NJDA did as a team at the national level was really focus on providing quality training for juvenile detention professionals through the NJDA Center for Professional Development that was based at Michigan State University. During this time Dave Roush was the director of CRPD and Carol Cramer Brooks was the training director. She was Dave's right hand person and what they tried to do was to ensure that the staff was getting the kind of training that would help them through this time period and still focus on providing quality services for youth. Mr. Liddell thought that they did a nice job of dealing with a bad situation, the best they could. Those who came out of those tough times and continued to maintain a positive approach with youth, felt good about riding the waves and getting to the beach instead of going under the waves. His most significant contribution to the field as

NJDA president was advocating for quality training for staff and keeping a positive focus on providing positive programs for kids in detention. The Center for Research and Professional Development was a fantastic organization that was funded by OJJDP.

The most significant advancement that has been made in juvenile detention since Mr. Liddell was president of NJDA was the evolution of positively focused programming. Mr. Liddell believes this has become the standard in the field of Juvenile detention, whereas, in the past the practice was focused more on custody than programs and services.. Luckily, Mr. Liddell recalls a different philosophy at the Berrien County Juvenile Center where he worked. This facility, one of the facilities that, even back in the eighties, used a short amount of time in the lives of the youth to help them look at things differently and hopefully make some changes in their behavior that could transfer to the community. The Berrien facility implemented a positively focused detention program (Counseling Economy) developed by Nehemiah (Don) Mead at the same time that positive programing was being implemented at the Calhoun County Michigan facility. The Calhoun County Juvenile Home was the facility where Dave Roush was the director ho implemented a cognitive behavioral program in detention. There were a few other places around the country that were really into positive programing, however, it was not until the mid to late nineties when the cognitive behavioral approaches (CBT) started to make their way into facilities nationally. Mr. Liddell thinks now there are many more facilities that are not just looking at juvenile detention as lock them up, do not do anything with them, just sit on them until the judge releases them, and make sure are they are here to make their court hearing. Now, Mr. Liddell adds, the juvenile detention_community is looking at what they can do in the limited amount of time they have youth in order to make a positive impact. He thinks this is the biggest progress that has been made in the field of juvenile detention. The population crisis (overcrowding) is not as pronounced as it used to be, partly because the Annie E. Casey Foundation through the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) has done a nice job of encouraging and assisting jurisdictions in controlling the front gates of juvenile detention facilities. JDAI works with courts and jurisdictions to keep the kids who do not need to be in juvenile detention out of the facility. That has really made a big difference in the field, so the youth who are in detention now are the youth who, by and large, need to be there to protect the community and ensure that they are there for their court hearing. Mr. Liddell summarized his response by saying that these two things, positive programing and making the environment in juvenile detention safer is something that he has seen as major progress in the juvenile detention field since he has been president.

Mr. Liddell believes that the most critical issues facing the National Juvenile Detention Association and the National Partnership for Juvenile Services in moving forward is really keeping focused on developing juvenile justice practitioners through professional development activities which should continue to enhance the quality of services provided to youth. He thinks that professional development is such a crucial component for success. Programs have been developed,, the security of the facilities has been improved, the detention environment has been addressed, but what really needs to occur is a focus on investing in the people who work in juvenile detention facilities through enhanced professional development, and leadership development. Mr. Liddell went on to add that the juvenile detention field start developing its future leaders and secure funding for leadership training programs. The current lack of federal funding for programs that NJDA and the Partnership is able to provide, is something that juvenile detention professionals should address. Hopefully, the public and funding authorities can be informed that by making an investment on the front end through NJDA/NPJS and investing in quality staff_development and organizational development, the field can make an even better impact on reducing juvenile delinquency and juvenile violence. Focusing on helping the staff develop to their fullest potential, recruiting good staff, retaining good staff is the goal. The pay in juvenile justice is not exactly the reason that people go into the field The intrinsic rewards are far superior to the financial rewards that people get in the field, so maybe trying to professionalize juvenile detention and juvenile justice even more than what has happened in the last twenty to thirty years would be a good start. Those are some of the challenges and dealing with some of the youth who are coming in with mental health issues that are critical, it really has not been addressed totally. Mr. Liddell feels these are areas that needs to be focused on in the future.

In terms of observation, looking back at his collegiate, undergrad time, Mr. Liddell commented that he had no clue what was going to happen in his future career. He thought something was going to happen, but he did not know what. He feels that he has been really blessed by getting into this field and being able to meet some incredible

people and work side by side with outstanding people in Berrien County, Highfields, State of Washington, NJDA, NPJS and is looking back at his career and thinking, "WOW! How did I luck out like this? How did I get the opportunity to have mentors like those folks I mentioned to you earlier?" Looking back, Mr.Liddell says he is pretty darn fortunate and appreciative. What he has tried to do as he was coming up in the field is to be a mentor for other people like those who were in that role for him during his career.. He is hopeful that he has been the kind of help and support for people that others were for him and that they will do the same thing for the next generation. Mr. Liddell stated to this interviewer, "I hope that you will also have the chance to have some mentors and really good friends/colleagues who will be your support system and your guide through the field'. Again, Mr. Liddell restated what a really lucky guy he has been to work with some great people and some some of whom have been a real "hoot". Some people who have not worked in a facility with these youth do not know what strengths and skills they actually have. Many are some good kids even if they have committed some bad actions. Many have some positive things going for them and if staff can bring some of that out, the youth can say, "WOW! I can actually do this".

Mr. Liddell after being asked also agreed to the fact that staff often feel great when they see youth in the community and they say "thank you", or tell staff how well they are doing, or even when they acknowledge their previous problematic behavior. But the greatest reward for staff is the simplest appreciation by the youth for the good job done by staff.