

Dan Hoffman:

Welcome to part two of the Rouss Review, the City Works portion of the show, where we talk about something related to city governance.

Today it's going to be the Juvenile Detention Center. Which your jurisdiction might not have within its borders, but highly, highly likely that your local town, city, county, participates in a juvenile detention center of some sort.

Amy Simmons:

And ours is actually located in the county, right?

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. Ours, technically, the Winchester Juvenile Detention Center is in Frederick County.

Amy Simmons:

But we are the fiscal agent for it.

Dan Hoffman:

We're the fiscal agent, and they're kind of my employees.

Amy Simmons:

Right. It's kind of weird.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah, but the six jurisdictions that participate with our JDC, Juvenile Detention Center, all contribute to it. I know Erin is anxious and eagerly awaiting this, so let's bring her on in. Okay, welcome, Erin Maloney.

Erin Maloney:

Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Dan Hoffman:

It's nice to have you. So, Erin, I always just say she runs our juvenile detention center, but what's your actual title?

Erin Maloney:

I'm the superintendent.

Dan Hoffman:

Superintendent.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Amy Simmons:

Yeah. That's a better word.

Dan Hoffman:

Which I think is a pretty appropriate word. Because it kind of also has a, you're not just administering the facility, but we have a superintendent of schools. We have a superintendent of this facility. And it is a school in many ways. There is a literal school in the facility.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

But kids are learning a lot of other lessons there as well. So let's start off just by talking about how you got into this particular field, and a little bit about your day-to-day life as the superintendent of a juvenile detention center.

Erin Maloney:

Okay. Well, I have no idea how I got into this particular field, honestly. You know, you don't wake up one day and say, "Hey, I want to be a superintendent of a juvenile detention center someday."

Dan Hoffman:

That's true.

Amy Simmons:

Yeah. Never crossed my mind.

Erin Maloney:

Just my career path brought me this way. So I have worked with kids my entire life. I went to Shenandoah University, got a education degree, actually. And after school, I was working for Frederick County Parks and Recreations as a part-time staff. Needed insurance, and I took a job at Grafton School. And that's a residential treatment facility for kids with mild to profound mental health issues.

So when the juvenile detention center opened, or was getting ready to open in 1997, I took the opportunity and applied. I started there in '97 as a Shift Supervisor and worked my way up. In 2005, I was promoted to the Assistant Superintendent. In 2013, I was promoted to the superintendent position.

So that has been kind of how I got to where I am today. And so a day in the life of a resident in our facility. So we hold kids predispositionally. Meaning that we hold them before they're given a sentence. We hold them pre-adjudicatory. Meaning before they're even found guilty or innocent.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. And we do that only when... We don't just throw kids in, when I say we, I really mean the judge. They don't just put kids in the juvenile detention center just because they feel like it.

There's going to be a lot of very serious reasons why a child is held. Not just in general, but prior to disposition. Because it's better for the kid to be at home if possible.

Erin Maloney:

Oh, absolutely.

Dan Hoffman:

So these are kids that, for which they would be a danger to others or themselves.

Erin Maloney:

That is correct. And honestly, we have been holding a lot more kids just because there's no other place for them to go. And so, any crime that you or I could be arrested on is what we hold on. With the exception of, we do hold contempt of court charges on truancy.

So a kid can go to court, they are found to be a truant, and the judge orders them to go to school every day, be of good behavior. They misbehave, they don't go to school, and then they come into us for contempt of court.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. Do the parents get in trouble for that too?

Erin Maloney:

You know, I've wanted that. Because a lot of the times, sometimes the parents could help more. Sometimes the parents don't have that ability. They have to get up, they have to go to work, they're out of the house before the kid needs to get up and go to school.

Sometimes the kids go to school, they leave school. The parents have no idea. However, in the cases where the parents basically just allow the kids to run the home, I feel like they should be held accountable.

So a day in the life of a resident in our facility. We wake them up at 6:45 in the morning. They have about 15 minutes to do their hygiene, get ready for the day, make their beds. At 7:00, they are allowed out onto their living units. And around 7:10, they eat breakfast. 8:10, they go to school.

And we have seven Frederick County teachers, one being a principal. We are very fortunate that two of our teachers started off as detention specialists with us back in '97. And so they have seen both sides. They have seen the school side, obviously now with them being on the education side. And they saw the detention side.

It's really, really helpful that they understand both sides of that. So our teachers are Frederick County teachers. They do an unbelievable job with these kids. Because in their classes, they could have a child reading and writing on a second or third grade level. Math skills on a second or third grade level.

And then they could have a child that is on grade level or above in that same class. They've got to find a way to educate that child, all those children. And they do an unbelievable job with those kids.

Dan Hoffman:

So they get a full school day.

Erin Maloney:

They do. They do.

Dan Hoffman:

Wow.

Amy Simmons:

And what ages do we accept?

Erin Maloney:

So sentenced to us, by Code of Virginia, they have to be at least 14 years of age. We hold 14 to 17. Our DJJ, which is the Department of Juvenile Justice Certification, we do not go above 18. So once they turn 18, they usually go to an adult facility.

Amy Simmons:

Okay. High school age.

Erin Maloney:

But we will hold, predispositionally, kids as young as 10. And so, again, our teachers have to be able to, and be prepared to, teach potential elementary school.

Dan Hoffman:

Every level. Yeah.

Erin Maloney:

They get 27 and a half hours of instruction per week. So they go to school at 8:10. And the way we have it set up is, our kids actually move, every 50 minutes they move throughout the building, like a high school. Like a regular high school.

They go back to their pods at 11:00 for lunch. 11:50, they start back up. 2:30, they go back to their pods for shift change, population count, and they stay in their cells until 3:00. We let them out of their cells... 3:00 to 4:00 is programming, depending upon the day. And really depending upon what the pod officer has ready for them for that day.

They do get a 3:00 snack. And then 4:00, they eat dinner. Usually between 5:00 and 7:00, each area gets to go up and use rec for at least an hour. We have to give them one hour of large muscle movement per day. And that is not to include PE class.

Then they go back to their pods, they go to their cells, they take showers. We have one child out at a time for their shower. And then depending upon their level, their behavioral management level, they start bedtimes at 8:30.

And so again, depending upon their level, new intakes, 8:30. Then as they move up and earn certain privileges, 9:00, 9:30. And then everybody's locked in their cell until 6:45 the next day.

Dan Hoffman:

And when you say population count, I can't imagine it takes too long, because we have how many kids right now?

Erin Maloney:

So today we have 17.

Dan Hoffman:

17. It's a little high today.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

So we're not talking about hundreds of kids.

Erin Maloney:

No.

Dan Hoffman:

If you're imagining this mass incarceration of children. We're talking 17 kids for the region.

Erin Maloney:

Correct.

Dan Hoffman:

And we'll get into that in just a minute.

Erin Maloney:

Yes. But we have 17 today, and our max population is 32. So we're not a huge facility. We are a little bit over 50% population today.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. Let's talk about that regional aspect. A city like Winchester, there's no way we could support, or would it make sense for us to have our own facility.

So we partner with seven other jurisdictions here in Northern Shenandoah Valley, county, whatever. And so this is really a regional collaborative. So we kids coming in from as far away as...

Erin Maloney:

So we serve six jurisdictions.

Dan Hoffman:

Six jurisdictions. Okay.

Erin Maloney:

Yes. We serve Winchester City, Frederick County, Clarke County, Shenandoah County, Page County, Warren County. And that is our regional facility.

The 26th District CSU, Court Service Unit, serves Harrisonburg and Rockingham as well. But they have Shenandoah Valley down in Staunton that they use.

Dan Hoffman:

Got it. So these kids come from pretty far away.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

I mean, the farthest is probably about an hour or so away?

Erin Maloney:

A little bit over an hour, when you look at the far reaches of Page County.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. So they get a nicely regimented, structured day.

Erin Maloney:

Yes. Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

How long do we normally have somebody in custody? A child in custody? Or at the facility, I should say.

Erin Maloney:

Well, that is a great question. Length of stay has varied, and it ebbs and flows. We run two programs. We run a general population program for all of the kids that are not sentenced into our Post-D program. Our Post-D program is something completely different that we run, and that is kids that are sentenced to us up to 180 days. And that is, they have to be sentenced under a very specific code section in order for them to spend that much time with us.

So depending on how many kids we have in our Post-D program, the amount of intakes that we have had over the past, I would say, five years has decreased. However, the length of stay has increased. So our average length of stay has been about 16 days.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, that's pretty low.

Erin Maloney:

Now, again, that's not including our Post-D program. And the amount of needs that the kids have has drastically increased over the last five years. Even though we serve less residents, we serve residents with more needs.

Dan Hoffman:

Okay. What kind of needs?

Erin Maloney:

Mental health. Mental health and substance abuse has increased drastically over the last five years.

Dan Hoffman:

Hmm. So, their sentence is done. They're done with the JDC. What then? If they're with you for an average of 16 days, and let's say there's a mental health issue. Obviously you're not going to solve that in 16 days.

Erin Maloney:

Right.

Dan Hoffman:

What steps are taken upon release to make sure that they're being released into some form of services, programming, to help them continue to heal?

Erin Maloney:

We like to call that a continuum of services. And if a child is new to the judicial arena, they might not be assigned a probation officer. The probation officer, along with our mental health therapist in the detention center, work extremely hard and extremely close at getting those kids hooked into services when they're released from us.

A lot of the times we also have to bring in other agencies, other local agencies, Northwestern Community Services is a big one. That we try to get them in with them, so that when they're released, at least they will have some supports at home. We try to tap into all kinds of different services in the localities.

Now, Winchester, for the service providers, probably has the most resources in the areas that we serve. And so we do try very, very hard at making sure that, if that child is on medications, that there is somebody that is following them. That they'd go to their medication management appointments.

Even down to trying to secure transportation. Because with juveniles, they have to rely on somebody else a lot of the time to get them to those services. Whereas adults, we're on our own.

So probation, Northwestern Community Services, private providers in the area. Really try hard at meeting the children, one, where they are. And number two, making sure that those kids get their needs met even after they are released from us.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. What is the most common misconception that people have about the JDC, or any JDC, really.

Erin Maloney:

That our building smells.

Amy Simmons:

Of all the things.

Dan Hoffman:

That's interesting. And it doesn't. I've been there.

Erin Maloney:

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman:

I can attest to, it does not smell. I mean, it has a smell, but not a bad smell.

Erin Maloney:

Right.

Dan Hoffman:

It's like you walk in and you're like, "Oh God, what's that smell?" It smells clean.

Erin Maloney:

Right. So before COVID, we did a lot of tours, community tours. And we will start to pick that up again.

Amy Simmons:

Yup. We have one for INSIGHT [Citizen's Academy] this coming year.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, nice.

Erin Maloney:

For the INSIGHT group. And a lot of the times when community groups come in, they come in and they're like, "Wow, it's clean, and it doesn't smell."

And sometimes it's just, really for the community, it's like, "Wow, I didn't even know we had a juvenile detention center here." So those are usually the two misconceptions. One, that we even existed. And number two, that it's very, very clean and very well taken care of.

Amy Simmons:

I would imagine it would be more of you're treating the kids like you see on TV.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. They're not in shackles, shuffling around, breaking rocks. Now granted, you guys are next door to the adult detention center.

Erin Maloney:

We are.

Dan Hoffman:



Which might make it seem a little more prison-like. And if you're in the facility itself, I can say, yeah, you're not going to confuse it for a hotel.

It's a detention center, let's be honest. But it's clean. There is a school there. And when you walk around it, you can tell that, yeah, this is a secure facility. No doubt. However, there's a lot of programming. There's a lot of supports that go on inside the building.

Erin Maloney:

We do. And we pride ourselves on... And we've had this philosophy ever since our first superintendent. Ever since we opened, we've had this philosophy.

We are a detention center by nature. That's what we do. We're punitive by nature. However, we teach our staff, of which we have the most fantastic staff, and in my opinion, than anyone in the state. There's 24 detention centers across the State of Virginia. And I would put up our staff-

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. That's right, kids. You're coming to our JDC.

Amy Simmons:

Watch out.

Erin Maloney:

That's right. That's right.

Dan Hoffman:

You're in for a treat.

Erin Maloney:

Well, yeah. I hate to say it, but there are some kids that would rather be in the detention center than to go home or other placements.

Dan Hoffman:

I can imagine.

Erin Maloney:

We take a treatment philosophy, that we are going to try to get these kids the services and whatever they need. However, we are also cognizant of the fact that these kids have victims in our communities, and we are not going to take these kids to baseball games and out to dinner and such.

Dan Hoffman:

They ain't going to Chuck E. Cheese.

Erin Maloney:

No. We have got to make sure that we maintain that balance of treatment. Treating the kids with respect when they're in our facility, because some of them haven't been found guilty yet.

You can't treat them like they are a common criminal, because some of them haven't been found guilty. So we have to strike that balance of being punitive by nature, but also getting these kids what they need. And a lot of the times, what they deserve.

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. And I'd imagine, actually for all of them, that they leave better than when they came in.

Erin Maloney:

I would like to think that.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes. They might not all go on to be doctors and lawyers and astronauts and whatnot, but at least for that average of 16 days, they're getting respect. They're getting schooling. They're getting nutritious meals, regular meals, which many of them may not be getting.

Amy Simmons:

Yes. Routine.

Dan Hoffman:

They're getting a routine. They're getting-

Erin Maloney:

Structure.

Dan Hoffman:

Structure.

Amy Simmons:

People that care.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

How could you not be a little better off? And granted, they're not there with their parents. But to be honest with you, their parents probably played a role in how they got to that point, possibly. So for some kids, this is the only option for at least a limited period of time.

Erin Maloney:

Well, and what our staff do such a great job with, is they are the role models for these kids. And a lot of these kids come in, and they have never had a positive adult role model.

I don't want to say never. They haven't had a consistent positive adult role model. So, by our staff just listening, a lot of the times they can make that connection. And I can't tell you how many times we have kids coming back just to say hello to the staff.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, good. For that reason. Okay.

Erin Maloney:

Well, we do have kids coming back for not a good reason. However, kids showing up at the front door saying, "Can I speak to so and so?" Calling in on holidays saying, "I just want to wish you guys a Happy Thanksgiving or a Merry Christmas." That's how much these kids think about...

I'm not saying all of them. But I would say the majority of them, they make that connection with staff. And maybe that connection will get them to think. Like you said, we're not going to change these kids in our 16 days.

We're not going to even change a lot of the times these kids in 180 days. Because if they're 16 years old and they've had 16 years of creating this criminal thinking, we're not going to change that in 180 days. But we're planting seeds.

And with that continuum of services, we hope that those seeds can be nurtured, and that at some point, those kids, a light bulb will go off and be like, "Oh, that's what they've been trying to tell me for all these years. That's what they've been trying to tell me."

Dan Hoffman:

Yeah. Yeah. You mentioned Thanksgiving. So one last question. What do kids do on Thanksgiving at the JDC?

Erin Maloney:

They do get a meal. And I'll be honest with you, the staff rave about this Thanksgiving meal. We contract with the adult facility, so they make all of our meals.

Dan Hoffman:

Got it.

Erin Maloney:

And they absolutely rave about this Thanksgiving meal that they get, and Christmas. All the big holidays.

Dan Hoffman:

Interesting.

Erin Maloney:

And we typically allow an extra phone call home, so that they can stay connected with their families. Same with Christmas.

We have a big Christmas facility meeting, or holiday, I should say. A big holiday facility meeting. We usually have it catered, and we invite the kids to come up as well and join in and eat. And boy do they eat. They certainly enjoy that. Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Nice. All right. Thanksgiving, we do a little something special on Thanksgiving.

Erin Maloney:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

The holiday time. And I think that's important. Because even though they've done bad in many cases, or at least they're-

Erin Maloney:

They're still kids.

Dan Hoffman:

So it's a balance. I like the way you used that. It's a balance. Making sure that they get the resources they need in order to hopefully plant some type of seed that might sprout in the future. Thank you very much. Thanks for coming in.

Erin Maloney:

Thank you. I appreciate it.

Dan Hoffman:

And you were nervous. You were totally fine.

Amy Simmons:

Totally fine. We knew you would be.

Erin Maloney:

Well, yes. I don't necessarily like this formal conversation. However, I certainly do enjoy talking about the detention center and bragging on what we do there. Because we do phenomenal work-

Dan Hoffman:

It's true.

Erin Maloney:

... at the detention center. And so it's this crazy thing, where I'm kind of glad people don't know we're there, because then that means we're doing our job.

Dan Hoffman:

All right. Thank you for coming in.

Erin Maloney:

Thank you. Appreciate it.

Dan Hoffman:

Erin was so nervous.

Amy Simmons:

She always gets so nervous.

Dan Hoffman:

But she's clearly fine. Totally smooth.

Amy Simmons:

So knowledgeable.

Dan Hoffman:

I had zero doubt. I've done enough conversations with Erin in my time here that I know exactly what I'm going to get.

Amy Simmons:

Which is why I keep asking her every year.

Dan Hoffman:

Exactly. She is consistent. She's thoughtful, she's coherent.

Amy Simmons:

Intelligent.

Dan Hoffman:

Which I know that might sound like a low bar. But I mean, we do hire great people here. We want them all to be thoughtful, intelligent, and consistent. So of course it's not going to change when we put a mic in front of her.

Amy Simmons:

No. And she's got a huge heart. She's in it for the right reasons.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh yeah. And that's a tough job.

Amy Simmons:

Oh, gosh. I couldn't do it.

Dan Hoffman:

Real tough job. No, no, I'd be crying every day.

Amy Simmons:

Me too.

Dan Hoffman:

All right. So thanks for sticking around, listening to part two of the Rouss Review, the City Works portion of the show. Next time we'll talk about...

Amy Simmons:

We are going to talk about economic development, community development.

Dan Hoffman:

Oh, that's right. Because the new guy is coming in.

Amy Simmons:

Right. Mike Ruddy.

Dan Hoffman:

The new community development guy.

Amy Simmons:

Yes.

Dan Hoffman:

Yes. But Rick, the new EDA guy, he starts actually pretty soon. Sometime in the next couple of weeks.

Amy Simmons:

Yup.

Dan Hoffman:

We'll talk to him soon. Probably in the early next year. But what we'll have next time is Mike Ruddy.

Amy Simmons:

Community development.

Dan Hoffman:

Director of Community Development. He oversees all the planning and housing, inspections and zoning stuff. And he's also British, so you're going to get to hear somebody with an accent on the show.

Amy Simmons:

So cool.

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Dan Hoffman:

We're going to class us up. All right. Stick around for that next time. And until then, we'll see you around City Hall.