Volunteers are an important presence at DYS. All youth committed to DYS will eventually return to their communities. DYS encourages community partners to engage youth, both within DYS facilities and while they are on parole, in a variety of meaningful activities in an effort to teach the life skills youth need to be successful, crime-free adults.

In FY10, community partners provided 38,457 volunteer hours! This is a remarkable achievement, surpassing the target goal of 30,000 hours.

Community involvement increases the likelihood of successful rehabilitation and productive reentry of youth back into the community. The agency has many faith-based and community partnerships in place to encourage youth to reach their full potential. Volunteers include the Ohio Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Boys Scouts of America, Junior Achievement, Epiphany Ministry, Kairos Torch Ministries and numerous churches and colleges.

DYS is committed to recruiting and retaining dedicated volunteers and reentry mentors to work with and mentor youth within the institutions and on parole. The department provides quality training and supervision to all volunteers. Volunteers can reap great rewards knowing they have made a positive impact on the life of a youth.

If you know of individuals interested in volunteering, please have them contact Clifford Smith, Administrator of the Office of Community Partnerships, at (614) 466-8561.

DYS embraces community partnerships including Ohio juvenile courts, a variety of universities, other state agencies, the Ohio Family and Children First Councils, public defenders, prosecutors, assorted foundations and many coalitions. In May 2010, the Department hosted a community based reform policy discussion for more than 50 stakeholders to discuss the vision for the future of juvenile justice in Ohio.

DYS has joined forces with the Governor’s Closing the Achievement Gap Initiative (CTAG), which is designed to improve the proficiencies, promotion and graduation rates of inner city, rural youth and youth of poverty. The CTAG Initiative Team, public school linkage coordinators, DYS transition coordinators and parole officers met this past August to discuss how DYS can use public school linkage coordinators to assist youth transitioning back to public schools. DYS and CTAG will continue to build upon this partnership in the coming year.

Last month, the agency teamed up with Voices for Ohio’s Children, a non-partisan collaborative. DYS highlighted reform efforts at Voices’ Kids Talk Series, a policy briefing for legislative staff on issues impacting Ohio’s children and their families.

Voices for Ohio’s Children and the Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio recently formed the Ohio Juvenile Justice Alliance (OJJA), which is dedicated to producing better outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. DYS anticipates a positive and collaborative working relationship with the OJJA.

The Office of Reentry Services at DYS develops and implements statewide reentry programs to ensure that all youth have a comprehensive plan for a successful return home. If you know of individuals interested in partnering with DYS to support reentry of youth, please have them contact Kim Humphrey, Reentry Manager, at 614-644-5179.