It’s hard to believe that we’re already in the holiday season, but Thanksgiving is right around the corner! So I’d like to thank you for everything you do to make sure that we are living our mission every day, from making sure our youth attend school, to teaching them once they’re there, to making sure they’re fed nutritious meals and are taking their medications, to helping them in programming and treatment sessions, to holding them accountable for their choices and providing a safe environment for all of us, I am grateful for your dedication.

Coached by horticulture teacher Mr. Cunningham, Circleville JCF youth participate in the Ohio Landscape Olympics

And in this spirit of gratitude, I’d like to acknowledge the staff at Circleville JCF and the DYS education team for enrolling a team of youth in the recent Ohio Landscape Olympics, where they competed in the plant identification, cost estimation, and plant installation events. They had the opportunity to
speak with landscape companies about future jobs/apprenticeships. A representative from CAT offered to let them operate a mini excavator (one took him up on it!) And all four youth got to participate in a statewide activity with more than 250 students from 18 schools. When it was all over, one youth commented that the day was both good and bad: “good because I get to be like other ‘normal’ kids for a day; bad because I see what I could have been doing if I hadn’t made the mistakes that got me locked up.”

I’m also grateful for the staff who ensure that our youth are completing their community service hours. Cuyahoga Hills JCF horticulture teacher Ms. Thompson-Davis helps her students grow vegetables to be donated to The City Mission, which helps the homeless population in Cleveland. At Indian River JCF, Activity Therapy Administrator Mr. Katusin recently organized two community service projects, whereby the youth made blankets for children and the homeless, and assembled learning aids for Crayons to Computers, an organization that aims to level the playing field in classrooms.

Our parole team often goes beyond the call of duty when it comes to helping not only our youth, but their families. Recently, at a family team meeting for a youth who was released from a facility, the youth’s mother mentioned to JPO Natalie Trachsel that she needed a stove. Ms. Trachsel worked with another JPO to secure the funding, and they procured one. The mother reports that she has been busy baking and will be cooking Thanksgiving dinner this year as a result.
These are only some examples of what you, our staff, do to ensure that we are habilitating our youth and empowering our families and communities. And I assure you that you are making a difference every single day, changing lives for the better and empowering young people to make better choices the next time around.

Thank you.