



LAUNCH YOUTH SERVICES PROVIDED BY:

Spring 2011

THE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER OF MADISON COUNTY  
THROUGH THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT AND THE ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS.

# The Launch Pad

## Successful Launches! Look at 'um go!

**Darios Bland** was a co-op student at Calhoun Community College employed at United Launch Alliance/Boeing when the recession of 2008 hit. He hung on longer than most during a series of layoffs but eventually lost his job. When he contacted his Launch counselor, he learned about an engineering aide internship program offered only one time per year on Redstone Arsenal. He persevered through the long, tedious electronic application, patiently balancing his two year old daughter on one knee while sitting at the Career Center computer. Result? Hired at over \$11 per hour! Darios then attended the Launch Dress for Success Workshop and received new dress shoes for his new job. Darios made the most of his opportunities and his hard work has been recognized. He completed his associate degree from Calhoun

Community College in Industrial Maintenance/Electrical and has gone on to receive a scholarship to study electrical engineering at Alabama A&M University. Darios is now a federal employee with benefits, a good salary and great future for himself and his little girl!



**Darios Bland and his daughter**

We are

### Travis Mendenhaul

first had interest in attending the Lineman program but then decided that might not be for him. He was employed with a cleaning and restoration company but saw no opportunity for upward advancement there after working hard for several years. But, Travis was smart about things, patient and persevering. He stayed with that job, received good reports from his supervisor and built some consistent work history for himself while learning more about other career options through the Launch Program. He explored the field of auto-body mechanics and made a road trip with his Launch counselor to the Nashville Auto-Diesel College NADC) in Tennessee. The rest is all success. Travis completed



and was hired upon graduation by Penske Automotive Collision in Scottsdale Arizona. He first began as a detailer and is working his way up now as a technician's helper. Travis says his goal is "to one day move back home and help the people in my community". We are so proud of Travis. We know he is a gift to all where ever he chooses to live.

## Ropes Course Event now offered 3 times a year!

Outdoor Ropes Challenge Course events are offered for Launch participants in the fall and spring on the impressive course located on the Mental Health Center property. The course incorporates both low and high physical obstacles and is intended to challenge participants to rise above their expectations of themselves and others. The Indoor Ropes course, offered in the winter months, is an indoor event involving games and physical activities that challenge our ability to problem solve and cooperate with others. Launch is

offering three opportunities this grant year for participants to experience creativity, teamwork and fun: October 13, 2010, March 1, 2011 and April



# The Launch Pad

## Launch Gives Back: Volunteering in our Communities

Albertville Launch youth, Adam Blanton, Haley Davis and Steven Guthrie worked for Operation Christmas Child in December, packing boxes and loading trucks with items for children suffering need around the world. Spring planting for the Albertville beautification project at the Career Center is in the works with flowers to be planted by the Launch youth. The Athens and Decatur communities benefited in December from the efforts of our Launch youth, Codi Davis,

Jessica Flores, and Rosetta Jones who volunteered their time to help to sort, tag and organize in the Salvation Army thrift shops. Huntsville youth, Drake Kale and Indea Hambrick have become well known at the Manna House through their ongoing commitment of volunteerism helping to serve families food and carry groceries to their car. New Hope's Beth Sanderson and Jennifer Snead were very appreciated by the teachers and early childhood director for

their volunteer work at Owens Cross Roads Elementary. These young people have helped to build a positive reputation for Launch in their communities. We are proud of our volunteers who have given back with positive results for all involved. Volunteering has a meaningful, positive impact on our community but it can also have many benefits for the volunteer! We encourage all our Launch Youth to join these outstanding Launch students in their efforts of giving to others.



## Launch Youth Gain Work Experience

Stimulus funding, provided through the Workforce Investment Act, has offered youth employment opportunity for the past 2 summers and this fall, the program was extended to include contracts for 6 months of employment from October 2010 through March 2011. Launch youth, Amberly Adkins, Karen Bynum, Jessica Campuzano, Amberly Cole, Alfonso Jones, Damond Jones, Zachary Mangum, Kayla Owens, Beth Sanderson, and Brittany White took advantage of this valuable opportunity to gain work experience and

income. Alfonso Jones, "AJ", from Huntsville, learned how valuable employment contacts can be when a gentleman that he thought was just another client coming into the career center, turned out to be a major employer with a local IT company who was so impressed with AJ that he spoke with the career center director and promised AJ a job when AJ has finished his education! When young people try to enter the workforce, 'where have you worked' is often the question that will eliminate them from

consideration for the job they desire. Launch youth who took advantage of the WIA work experience will stand a better chance in making that first cut. They will be able to respond, "Yes, I have had some work experience!" The Federal Youth Employment Program in which Darius Bland participated (see article on page 1) begins soon. Interested youth need to contact their Launch coordinator and counselor for more information about how to apply.



Alfonso Jones, Huntsville



Beth Sanderson, New Hope

## Launch Groups Foster Career Development



Indea Hambrick with Huntsville Coordinator Clarissa Tibbs.

Launch group sessions are held weekly at each county location. Topics for discussion are chosen according to the participant's interests and needs and cover a variety of skill areas from the very practical (how to write a resume) to more inter-personal (managing emotions). The groups offer information and the opportunity for discussion and practice of skills that can improve the quality of one's life and the potential for success in the workplace. Groups are always informative, casual and supportive. Recent attendees of a special group just for new moms received information on parenting, lunch and a host of new baby items which were donated by Good Shepherd Methodist Church in Huntsville. Information on future group topics to be held can be found posted on Facebook or by contacting the Launch counselor at each Launch location.

## Compass Bank support for Launch Participants



Compass financial counselors will be coming to Launch locations in March to explain their “Compass for your Cause” and “Refer a Friend” programs. A student checking account can be opened with a minimum deposit of \$25.00. After the student uses the account for a minimum of 5 transactions, with a second deposit of any

amount of money, the student will receive a \$25.00 from Compass Bank! Accountants at the Mental Health Center have reviewed these programs and believe them to be real deals! Launch participants are encouraged to contact their Launch coordinators and counselors for details about how to participate.



**13 Launch participants gained GED!!!**

- Heather Bennett
- Gerron Chunn
- Gerome Gadlin
- Ronnie Glasgow
- Kayla Hedden
- Jaron Moore
- Samantha Morrow
- Justin Oliver
- Keisha Parris
- Jasmine Parker
- Paresh Patel
- Jennifer Sneed
- Beth Sanderson

## Launch sponsors “Lunch time talks” with Community Professionals

Community professionals representing a variety of different career areas visited with Launch youth during the month of February to share their knowledge, experience and expertise. The presentations were offered in relaxed, small group settings at the Alabama Career Center locations in Albertville, Decatur and Huntsville and at the Family Service Center in Athens. Some of the career areas explored were automotive technology, welding, office systems, nursing, dental assistance, physical therapy, EMT, art and graphic design. Speakers from Bancorp South, Red Cross, Progress Rail, Marshall Medical South, BPI industries, Drake State, UAH nursing school and the National

Guard volunteered their time to share their personal experience and expertise. These opportunities gave participants direct access to employers and industry leaders to ask questions and learn about the realities of different career choices and opportunities. Gaining information is the first step to creating the vision of a path that can lead to an independent and positive future.



Jessica Campuzano and Jessica Flores

**Best of luck to all those planning to take the GED test this Spring!**

### Other Accomplishments for 2010– 2011:

**41 Launch Participants have enrolled in post-secondary & advanced training**

**14 Launch Participants have gained their Career Readiness Credential**

**48 Launch Participants have gained employment**

## LAUNCH CELEBRATES EXPANSION NOW SERVING 4 COUNTIES

The Launch Youth Services Program had its beginnings Madison and Marshall County in 2002. During the 2009- 2010 grant year, new partnerships were begun to extend outreach services to Athens, Decatur and New Hope. With the 2010-2011 grant year, funding was provided to enable the hiring of additional staff to service these areas and permanent offices were established. Launch is now serving 303 youth in Madison, Morgan, Marshall and Limestone Counties through the Alabama Career Center System in Huntsville, Decatur and Albertville, through the Family Service Center in Athens and the C.A.R.E. Center in New Hope. Launch, now located in 4 counties, is providing even wider opportunity for our Northern Alabama youth to accomplish their career goals!



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Central Office:  
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Visit us on the web

[Launchprogram.org](http://Launchprogram.org)

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Mental Health Center of  
Madison County  
4040 S Memorial Parkway  
Huntsville AL 35802



## Contact Us!!!!



### Madison County:

Huntsville Career Center

Rashmi Chauhan, Counselor: 256-851-6414

Clarissa Tibbs, Coordinator: 256- 851-6411

New Hope Care Center

MaryAnn Schnur, Counselor/Coordinator: 256-723-2273 ext 106

### Marshall County:

Albertville Career Center

Jim Greene, Coordinator: 256-894-4725

Libna Arroyo, Counselor: 256-744-0191

### Morgan and Limestone Counties:

Decatur Career Center and Athens Family Resource Center

Nicole Allen, Coordinator: 256-665-1564

Amy Bryant, Counselor: 256-651-1873

**Hours of operation: Monday through Thursday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm and Fridays 8:00 am to 12:00pm**

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training at NADC