



State of Connecticut
Judicial Branch
Community Court
Session
At
Hartford

80 Washington Street, Hartford, CT 06106

July 2004 News & Updates

Produced by Chris M. Pleasanton, Volume 6, Issue 7

THE STRIVE/SAND PROGRAM PROVIDING

JOB READINESS TRAINING THROUGH COMMUNITY COURT

One of the most important components of restorative justice is to provide a defendant with an opportunity to address the social needs that may be contributing to their behavior. Community Court defendants are affected by a wide range of social issues -- from mental health and substance abuse to poor health care and lack of safe housing. Among those core issues is unemployment and lack of marketable job skills. In an effort to address this need, the Community Court in Hartford has been working in collaboration with the STRIVE/SAND Program to provide job training and placement opportunities to in need defendants.

STRIVE/SAND is a non-profit organization that provides intensive job-readiness training with a focus on personal accountability, responsibility and personal growth that addresses personal obstacles to success. The program is particularly adept at working with people with prior criminal histories and other traditional obstacles to meaningful employment. STRIVE/SAND's job readiness class is a three-week program, conducted every month and is free to participants. STRIVE/SAND works with participants to arrange transportation to classes and to provide professional attire. Participants are also provided with job placement services, enhanced educational opportunities, and continued access to social services.

In an effort to make this opportunity more accessible to Community Court defendants, STRIVE/SAND recruiter Corendis Bonner works on-site at the Community Court each Wednesday to meet with defendants who may benefit from the program.

"At STRIVE/SAND we know our model works," Ms. Bonner said. "If you can change your thoughts, you can change your actions and foster success."

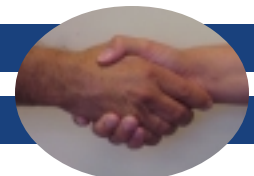
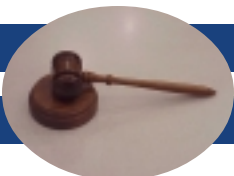
For more information or to sign up for the STRIVE/SAND Program, please contact Corendis Bonner at (860) 278-8460 ext. 23.



Corendis Bonner, STRIVE/SAND
Outreach Worker

MONTHLY COMMUNITY COURT STATISTICS JUNE 2004

Hours of Community Service	3408
Total Number of Cases Processed	934
Number of Human Services Referrals	141
Referrals to HAMP (Hartford Area Mediation)	40



WEEK OF JUNE 7, 2004

THE CONNECTICUT LAW TRIBUNE

Advice of Counsel

COMMUNITY COURTS, COMMUNITY JUSTICE

The Connecticut Community Court, located in Hartford, is one of the very real success stories of the Connecticut Judicial Branch. Its principal purpose is to offload relatively minor criminal cases arising out of GA-14, the Hartford-based Superior Court. Persons committed to the Community Court are processed in a variety of ways not readily available to the traffic that flows through our judicial system.

In the normal flow, prosecutors seek to invoke criminal sanctions against persons brought by them into the criminal justice system. Public defenders seek the best plea bargain they can negotiate or to exonerate their clients completely. Judges will scrutinize evidence of wrongdoing and give defendants the benefit of the doubt in cases weakly argued or poorly supported.

The Community Court takes a different approach. Criminal defendants, referred to the court by the

police as an alternative to an arrest warrant, are given the option, in most cases, of rendering organized community services in return for eradicating their record. Typically these services involve cleaning up or otherwise improving the city's neighborhoods.

The principal participants are not so much concerned with determining guilt vs. innocence, but rather with finding a way to expedite resolution of the matter to the benefit of all the parties. In 2003, more than 80 percent of the 7,000 cases presented to the court were dispatched in this way and over 75 percent of those so "sentenced" performed their obligation. Defendants who commit to fulfilling their community service obligation, but who fail to do so, risk a more traditional response to their alleged criminal behavior.

The Community Court has also evolved a unique response for minor cases involving victim and perpetrator. Through the Hartford Area Mediation Program, trained volunteers sit down with the main players in a petty crime

scenario and try to work out bargained settlements satisfactory to the injured party, the defendant, and other players in the system.

The court's approach works precisely because of its relaxed informality and its relative abandonment of traditionally fixed positions among the players. Although it would appear to offer obvious advantages to other stressed court calendars throughout the state, regrettably it has only cloned itself in Waterbury, and there only part-time.

Connecticut's Judicial Branch should take a closer look at this attractive alternative, and the legislature, in its future appropriation deliberations, should lend its enthusiastic support as well. ■

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COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT HOTLINE 756-7000

HAMP NAMES NEW PROGRAM MANAGER

Erini Orsaris has been named the new Program Manager for the Hartford Area Mediation Program (HAMP). Starting as an intern with HAMP in 1996, Erini was trained in mediation and has served as a mediation specialist before being named Program Manager in June.

As Program Manager for HAMP, Erini still will be involved with casework in addition to her new organizational duties. Among the areas Erini is looking to expand within HAMP are anger management opportunities, juvenile mediation, and promoting closer ties with local schools.

HAMP plays a very important role in the Community Court, handling over 550 cases in 2003 alone.

"I believe mediation is important because it empowers disputing parties to resolve a situation without violence," Ms. Orsaris said. "As Program Manager for HAMP, I look forward to continuing the effort to help people through mediation."

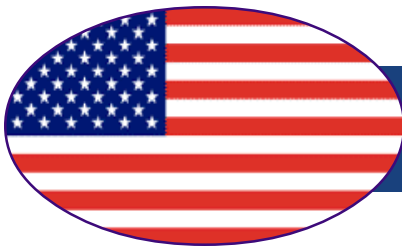


HAMP LOOKING FOR PART-TIME CASE WORKER

The Hartford Area Mediation Program is currently looking for a part-time Court Liaison/Case Manager in Hartford. The job entail 25 hours per week and duties include proving HAMP with a presence in court, to perform initial intake and case assessments, and perform evening mediation sessions.

A college degree is preferred but mediation training/experience will be considered in lieu of a degree. Qualified candidates should send resumes to Erini Orsaris, Program Manager, Hartford Area Mediation Program, 96 Wadsworth Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

(Please do not contact the Community Court with resumes or questions, as this position is with an independent agency . The Court will play no part in the hiring process.)



Community Service



Community Pride



COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK SITES JUNE 2004

June 1	Pope Park Highway, Putnam Street, Affleck Street	June 15	Garden Street, Nelson Street, Edgewood Street, Greenfield Street, Capen Street
June 2	East Morningside, West Morning Side, Euclid Street	June 16-17	Dutch Point
June 3	Newton Street, Orange Street, Cherry Street, Hazel Street	June 18	FOODSHARE - Mahoney Village, Golden Age Senior Center
June 4	FOODSHARE - Mahoney Village, Smith Towers, Golden Age Senior Center	June 21	Dutch Point
June 7	Dutch Point, Colt Park, Stonington Street	June 22	Vine Street, Greenfield Street, Enfield Street
June 8	Belden Street, Green Street, East Center Street, Florence Street, Syms Street	June 23	Green Street, Fairmont Street, Bethel Street, Pliny Street, Jefferson Street, Lincoln Street
June 9	South Marshall Street, Laurel Street	June 24	Center Street, Windsor Street, Mather Street,
June 10	Canterbury Street, Ridgefield Street, Holcomb Street	June 25	FOODSHARE - Faith Manor, La Casa de Puerto Rico, Russ Street, Oak Street
June 14	Jefferson Street, Hamilton Avenue	June 28	Cedar Street, Park Street, Dutch Point
		June 29	Grafton Street, Saybrook Street
		June 30	FOODSHARE - Place of Grace/Food Pantry, Albany Avenue

COMMUNITY SERVICE PERFORMED AT EBONY HORSE WOMEN RANCH THROUGHOUT THE MONTH
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CHRIS MENA, CPA, COMMUNITY COURT COMMUNITY SERVICE TEAM

AMIR LOGO PRESENTED TO COMMUNITY COURT

The Community Court in Hartford was presented with a framed logo by the African Men In Recovery (AMIR) program at the Rights of Passage graduation ceremony for 60 AMIR participants on July 15. The framed logo, presented to the Community Court for its support of the AMIR program, was signed by many of the AMIR graduates and staff. It currently hangs in a display case outside the courtroom.



AMIR is an intensive peer-to-peer counseling and education program, combined with cultural sensitivity, designed to assist men at risk of incarceration to address the social issues that affect their lives including substance abuse, physical and mental health, education, employment, and self respect. Several Community Court clients have participated and graduated from the AMIR program over the past two years.

“We are very honored to be recognized and welcomed by the AMIR participants and staff,” Judge Simón said. “It is truly gratifying to see the hard work of these men paying off as they take the first steps to renewing productive and healthy lives.”

(Pictured at left: The AMIR logo in the Community Court display case)

Please feel free to email the court with questions or comments at:
Hartford.Commcourt@jud.state.ct.us

and visit the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch website at:

www.jud.state.ct.us