

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Community Court Session At Hartford

SPRING 2006 News & Updates

Produced by Chris Pleasanton, Vol. 8, Issue 1

HELPING VETS IN CT

The Community Court Session in Hartford is continually seeking to provide better service opportunities for its defendant clients. One area the court has recently expanded is the availability of services for veterans. This expansion has been accomplished by developing a relationship with the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund (SSMF), which is a state agency. Bail Commissioner Nate Cotton, who is also a Major in the Army Reserve, introduced the court to the agency. As a result, Jerry Dierman, a volunteer with Employers in Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton have explored ways of connecting qualified Community Court defendants with services offer by SSMF.

The Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund provides everything from mentoring to weekly assistance on a temporary basis for qualified individuals who have served in the military during a time of war and have an honorably discharge. Those that have prior active military service and are subject to call up may also be eligible for assistance. While the various types of temporary assistance is free it comes with a level of accountability for participants. For instance, unemployed individuals may be required to seek employment from five businesses in a week in order to receive assistance.

The Fund is a Connecticut state agency that was originally started with funds slated as bonuses for returning WWI veterans. The money was put into a trust fund, and with additional contributions through the years, grew to approximately \$61 million by 2005. Fund investments are managed by Connecticut's state treasurer and are administered by the American Legion.

While ESGR supports business and agencies with employees who are activated in the Guard and Reserve, they also assist those that have been activated in respect to what their rights are under federal legislation. ESGR also offers guidance in respect to employment, schooling, and other issues.

For more information about the Connecticut SSMF and the ESGR program, please contact SSMF Administrator/ESGR Representative Jerry Dierman at 860-953-4345.



ESGR Representative Jerry Dierman and Community Court Senior Bail Commissioner Nate Cotton

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COMMUNITY COURT STATISTICS

WINTER 2005-6

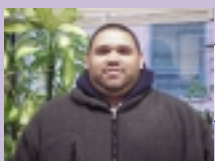
DEC

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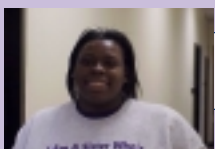
FEB

	<i>DEC</i>	<i>JAN</i>	<i>FEB</i>
Total Arraignments	473	532	434
Community Service Hours	984	810	1152
Social Services Referrals	188	155	102
Referrals to Mediation	40	40	35
Rate of Compliance	94%	92%	92%
Suburban Caseload	16%	19%	20%

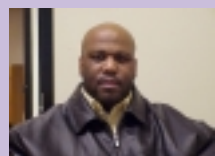
STAFF NOTES



Farewell to Ramon Flores, who is leaving his job as a Community Service Field Supervisor to work for the City of Hartford's Registrar of Voters. Thanks for doing such a great job and best wishes in your future!



Farewell also goes out to Pam Lee, who is leaving her job as a Community Service Field Supervisor for a new opportunity. Thank you for also doing a great job and best wishes for your future success.



Welcome to Mike Thompson, who joins the Community Court staff as a CPA Community Service Filed Supervisor. Mike will be responsible for transporting and supervising a crews of defendants performing community service to resolve their case at the Community Court.



JIM QUIGLEY RETIRES

The Community Court in Hartford would like to wish a fond farewell to Judicial Marshal James Quigley, who is retiring after eleven years of service, of which he has spent the last three years at the Community Court. Prior to his service as a Judicial Marshal, Jim was a Hartford Police Officer for over 25 years. Jim is pictured above (with plaque) surrounded by Supervising Marshal Brian Clemens, Chief Judicial Marshal Larry Callahan, and Supervising Marshal Tom Grodecki.

"Jim did an outstanding job and his strong work ethic was an example for other Marshals to follow," said Supervising Judicial Marshal Tom Grodecki. "More than that, he is a friend to us all here at the Court and we will miss seeing him."

YOUNG OFFENDERS

An Inside Look at the Hurdles to Success

By Anthony McLendon, CPA Program Manager

The challenges of managing a pretrial release and supervision program for adolescents are many. For one thing, most of our clients in the CPA Young Offender's Program are between the ages of 16 and 18. Like most teens, they tend to see themselves as indestructible. This often leads them to make decisions that not only put their physical well being at risk, but also put them at odds with the laws of our society.

Substance use, sale of controlled substances and car theft are but a few examples of this phenomenon. In their search for peer acceptance, entertainment or money, these kids often engage in such activities with a blasé attitude that many adults find shocking. Some youth are involved in these activities on a regular basis, while others only engage infrequently. The maturity level of most adolescents makes it difficult for them to appreciate the long-term consequences of such behavior. Indeed, they often lack an appreciation for even the short-term consequences!

Once an adolescent becomes involved in the criminal justice system, new problems arise. The same lack of maturity that contributed to their illegal behavior often continues to work to their detriment. Our clients often behave as if they have no clue that they are being prosecuted by our criminal justice system. They often fail to comprehend what is happening in the courtroom. They also have trouble understanding how their program compliance is linked to the outcome of their court case. Their "friends" often make the problem worse, minimizing their predicament, while encouraging them to engage in activities that continue to put their freedom at risk.



Anthony McLendon, CPA
Young Offenders Program Manager

The circumstances of a young person's life also have a huge influence on their behavior. Many (though by no means all) of our clients live in homes where substance use, skipping school and incarceration are the norm. Many of these kids receive little or no pressure from the adults in their life to finish school. Youth who sell drugs are often appreciated for the money they bring into the household.

In many homes, there is a lack of expectations for the children. A structured daily schedule is often foreign even to the adults. Many kids have not attended school for years, with no repercussions from their guardian. When we conduct home visits, we often find parents using the very substances our clients are tested for in their drug screens. Needless to say, these and many more factors make it difficult reach and help these kids. The payoff, however, is that most of these youth tend to respond positively to our efforts. Parents who have given up often renew their efforts, once they feel supported and validated by programs such as ours. To facilitate such change is both a privilege and an honor.

PARK STREET PHOTO EXHIBIT

The Community Court in Hartford is pleased to be hosting the photo exhibit "The Life of Park Street" by photographer and Trinity College student Bridget Reilly. Ms. Reilly originally took the pictures as a part of a class project at Trinity that required students to learn about Hartford's neighborhoods. Judge Simón subsequently invited Ms. Reilly to display her photos at the Community Court after she was featured in a local newspaper article.

Titled "The Life of Park Street," Ms. Reilly's photos were officially unveiled at a March 1, 2006, ceremony at the Community Court, which was attended by guest speaker Hartford Mayor Eddie Perez, Trinity students and officials, representatives from Park Streets business community, and Community Court staff.

"The Community Court tries to reflect the community in the way we handle cases," Judge Simón stated. "Bridget's photos also allow us to reflect some of the beauty in Hartford by showing the people and places in one of Hartford's most vibrant neighborhoods."

Mayor Perez spoke of the vibrancy of Ms. Reilly's photographs and how it reflected the vibrancy of Hartford.

Ms. Reilly's "The Life of Park Street" photo exhibit is on display in the main public hallway of the Community Court in Hartford at 80 Washington Street and is available for public viewing during normal business hours 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Special thanks to Mayor Perez for attending and speaking at this opening event.



Mayor Eddie Perez, Photographer Bridget Reilly, and Honorable Jorge Simón in front of Bridget's pictures (Above) and (at right) Mayor Perez and Ms. Reilly looking at some of her photographs.





Some pictures from "THE LIFE OF PARK STREET" by photographer Bridget Reilly, currently on display in the public hallway of the Community Court in Hartford. Please note, these pictures are photographs of the actual photos on display and may have reflections or have been cropped slightly to fit in this publication. Ms. Reilly's originals are larger in size and have much more vivid color.

LET'S CELEBRATE 7 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SUCCESS

*by Ramon Rojano, Director
City of Hartford Dept. of Health & Human Services*

In November of 1998, when the Hartford Community Court opened its doors, a major dream materialized for Hartford residents. It happened at a time when quality of life violations were rampant in the city. As it was almost impossible for GA -14 to prosecute quality of life violations, the lack of an effective vehicle to expediently address these issues made the members of the Comprehensive Community Partnership worry. However, people continued to search for a solution until a light started to show at the end of the tunnel. Through persistent networking and research, it was found that such a thing as a "community court" was successfully tried in another community. After so many planning sessions, the Hartford Community Court, a unique partnership between the City of Hartford, the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch, community leaders and the residents of Hartford, was established. This specialized session of the Connecticut Superior Court is devoted solely to addressing "quality of life" crimes. Offenders of "quality of life" crimes are accountable to the criminal justice system and to the community where the crime was committed. A whole new concept, "community restitution", was brought into our community.



The City of Hartford Community Court team: (Left to right) Caseworker Yanira Rodriguez, Director Ramon Rojano, Administrative Assistant Lorraine Sullivan, and Caseworker Denice Bermudez

.....7 YEARS CONTINUED

Since the beginning, the Hartford Health and Human Services Department was a primary player within the planning process. We wanted not only to replicate the success of the New York City Midtown Community Court, but also we wanted to improve it. The special "Hartford formula" was to create a Human Services division within the Community Court. Ever since its inception, Health & Human Services oversees and coordinates the Human Services component of the court. The City's staff works jointly with the State of Connecticut's Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Capitol Region Mental Health Center and other agencies to address the root causes that may contribute to the sanctioned behavior.

Continuously, for seven years, the Hartford Community Court has been one of the most successful projects that the state and the city have ever done together. The statistics are just impressive. From November 1998, to October 2005, 53184 arraignments took place. Out of those, Health & Human Services staff interviewed 18,788 individuals and helped connect 7,846 clients with other social service agencies. Special programs were designed and many people improved their lives.

But we are not resting on our laurels. While we have been successful, there is still work to be done to better address the needs of the Hartford community as well as the defendants'. Many quality of life issues remain unresolved and others continue to re-emerge on a daily basis. Analyzing many factors related to quality of life offenses, it becomes evident that we need to implement some additional programs to prevent the occurrence and re-occurrence of such violations. For example, there is the need to embrace a major community education campaign to address issues of social discipline and civic responsibility. We also found that more services for alcohol and substance users are needed.

In summary, the close interaction between justice and social services has proven to be effective. In years to come, the Community Court is expected to continue to be developed further by searching for innovative ways to address special community needs. Because of the commitment of the parties involved, the chances of succeeding in this endeavor are very high.

RESTITUTION IN MEDIATION

By Kendy Rossi, Mediation Specialist, HAMP

She was a young, single mother who made a big mistake. She had been working at a franchise hardware store, and didn't have money to buy Christmas presents for her kids. She figured out how to skim some cash from her till by pretending to do customer refunds – at least, she thought she had figured it out. A month and \$1,020 later, the store's internal investigator called her into the office, and showed her the videotape of her last "transaction." She was charged with larceny, taken to Jennings Road in a cruiser and ordered to appear in Hartford's Community Court.

Fifteen months later, this young woman stood smiling before Judge Simón with a representative of the Hartford Area Mediation Program (HAMP), to whom she had just handed over her last \$50 money order. The defendant had slowly but persistently paid back all of the money she had stolen from her former employer. "It feels good," she said. "It feels good to be done, and it feels good to have made things right."

Most people recognize HAMP as the program that offers mediation services for defendants involved in some type of interpersonal dispute. Not as well known is their role in facilitating restitution payments from defendants who are charged with stealing (larceny) or damage to property (criminal mischief). HAMP's restitution service carries out the philosophy of Community Court: hold defendants accountable, and give them the opportunity to correct their mistakes by giving back to the individuals and the community affected by their actions.



HAMP staff Erini Osaris, Michal Ayalon, and Kendy Rossi

Take, for example, the case of a young man charged with 27 counts of vandalism in and around West Hartford last summer. The logistics went something like this: HAMP staff tracked down the property owners affected by the graffiti (which included not only the Town of West Hartford and the Parks Department, but also eleven small business owners), assisted them in getting estimates for the repair of damage, then summarized them for Prosecutor Glenn Kaas so he could determine the total amount owed by the defendant. (This research and legwork is especially important in Community Court, where the State's Attorney does not have an investigator to perform such tasks.) After financial restitution was ordered, HAMP scheduled the payments, collected money orders from the defendant, and forwarded them to the thirteen different complainants. In this particular case, over \$2,200 was successfully returned to the community within sixty days. And in the process, the defendant gained a genuine understanding of the social and financial cost of his actions.

***For more information on HAMP, please call
Program Manager Erini Osaris at (860) 280-1184***

...RESTITUTION CONTINUED

Graffiti and employee theft are just a few of the types of cases that State's Attorney Kaas refers to HAMP for restitution. Other examples include dents in cars from disgruntled ex-girlfriends, unpaid cab fare, broken storefront windows from late-night bar goers, and broken door locks from uninvited guests. HAMP also, in some cases, helps victims reclaim out-of-pocket medical expenses. Payment amounts have ranged from a \$5 theft out of a co-worker's purse, to well over \$2,000 for damage to the door of a gas station. Since July 2005 (the beginning of our fiscal year), HAMP has successfully resolved 53 restitution cases, recovering more than \$17,833 in damages.

In this process of facilitating restitution, HAMP helps people and businesses efficiently reclaim losses without the added stress of small claims court. But the process also gives victims a chance for their voices to be heard. In the West Hartford graffiti case, the HAMP rep individually talked with each business owner, allowing them to express their frustration, and listening to their concerns about the increase and impact of defaced property within their neighborhood. As one business owner put it, "I'm surprised and grateful that the courts care enough to send someone out to talk with us, and to help us recover our losses." In this way, HAMP staff use their mediation skills to help create a genuine sense of resolution, and they bring the human face of the Court out into the community.

NCCC STUDENTS VISIT COURT

The Community Court in Hartford was pleased to host its sixth annual visit by student in the Criminal Justice Program at the Northwestern Connecticut Community-Technical College (NCCC) on March 6, 2006. Led by NCCC Criminal Justice Program Manager/Assistant Professor Barry D'Onofrio, the NCCC students met with Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton, who talked about how Community Court works, its programs, what kinds of cases it deals with and the concept of restorative justice. The students then observed a session of the Court and met afterwards with Judge Simón for a question and answer session.

"I am constantly impressed by the NCCC Criminal Justice students," Coordinator Chris Pleasanton said. "They ask very insightful questions which show me that not only do they observe the proceedings carefully, but also that they are learning a great deal from Professor D'Onofrio and the other teachers at NCCC. We are looking forward to their visit next year."



Community Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton and NCCC Criminal Justice Program Coordinator/Assistant Professor Barry D'Onofrio

COMMUNITY COURT INTERNS

The Community Court in Hartford is fortunate to be hosting three interns this Spring. The interns, who are under the supervision of Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton, have worked throughout the Court on a wide variety of projects.

Rachel Douglass, a student in the Criminal Justice Program at Northwestern Connecticut Community-Technical College, has interned at the Community Court since November 2005.

Christine Zozula is a graduate student at the University of Connecticut. She would like to write a thesis on the roles of the Court officers in a community court.

Lyndsay Ruffolo is a senior in the Criminal Justice Program at Central Connecticut State University and is also president of the school's Criminal Justice Club.

"The interns have done a great job and have displayed a great deal of professionalism and a terrific work ethic," Chris Pleasanton said. "We are very grateful for their hard work and dedication to helping us."



COMMUNITY COURT INTERNS (L to R):
Rachel Douglass, Lyndsay Ruffolo,
Christine Zozula

COMMUNITY NOTES

Upcoming M.A.R.G. Meetings

The Maple Avenue Revitalization Group (M.A.R.G.) is having upcoming meetings that begin at 6 p.m. at St. Augustine's Church on April 5 and May 11. The meeting on June 8 will be at the Jubilee House on Clifford Street. Local residents are invited to discuss community and public safety issues important to them. Community Court staff often attend to report on the Court's activities and answer any questions. For more information, please call Hyacinth Yennie at 296-5543.

COMMUNITY COURT CONTACT INFO

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

Winter 2005 - 2006 COMMUNITY SERVICE

WORK SITES

DECEMBER

- Dec. 1 Ebony Horse Women barn
- Dec. 2 Main St. Cemetery
- Dec. 5 Ebony Horse Women barn
- Dec. 6 Mahl Ave.,
Capen St.,
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 7 Lawrence St.,
Putnam St.,
Affleck St.,
Babcock St.,
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 8 New Britain
Ave., Broad
St., FOODSHARE
- Dec. 9 Asylum St.
- Dec. 12 Hillside Ave.
- Dec. 13 Greenwood St., Sisson Ave.
- Dec. 14 FOODSHARE
- Dec. 15 Ebony Horse Women barn,
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 16
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 19
Hillside Ave.
- Dec. 20
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 21
Orange St.
- Dec. 22
Edgewood
St., Burton
St., Cabot St., Sterling St.,
Ebony Horse Women barn,
FOODSHARE
- Dec. 23 FOODSHARE



JANUARY

- Jan. 3 Inside Court facility due to
inclement weather
- Jan. 4 various snow removal projects
- Jan. 5 South St.
- Jan. 6 Garfield St.,
Hebron St.,
Sharon St.,
FOODSHARE
- Jan. 9 Laurel St.,
Farmington Ave.,
Mather St.,
Vine St.,
Greenfield St.
- Jan. 10 Zion St., Hillside Ave.
- Jan. 11 Shultas Place
- Jan. 12 Windsor St., Park St.
- Jan. 13 Barker St.,
Franklin Ave.,
FOODSHARE
- Jan. 17 Albany Ave.,
Garden St.,
various snow
removal
projects
- Jan. 18 Windsor St.,
Capitol Ave.,
Russ St., FOODSHARE
- Jan. 19 Washington St.
- Jan. 20 FOODSHARE
- Jan. 23 Vine St.
- Jan. 24 Russ St., Enfield St., Main St.,
Capen St., Sanford St.
- Jan. 25 Enfield St. Washington St.,
Jefferson St.,
- Jan. 26 Westland St., Enfield St.,
New Park Ave.
- Jan. 27 FOODSHARE
- Jan. 30 Washington St., Ward St.,
Wolcott St.
- Jan. 31 Nelton Court, Park St.

FEBRUARY

- Feb. 1 Zion St.
- Feb. 2 FOODSHARE, Ebony Horse
Women barn, Laurel St.
- Feb. 3 FOODSHARE
- Feb. 6 Whitmore St.
- Feb. 7 Sherbrooke Ave., Grafton St.,
Washington St.
- Feb. 8 Main St. cemetery
- Feb. 9 Zion St.
- Feb. 10
FOODSHARE
- Feb. 14
Babcock St.,
Russ St.,
Park St.,
Putnam St.,
Zion St.
- Feb. 15
Jefferson St.
- Feb. 16 Windsor St., Washington St.
- Feb. 17 Albany Ave.
- Feb. 21 Lawrence St., Putnam St.
- Feb. 22 Affleck St., Allen St.,
Jefferson St.
- Feb. 23 Park St., Main St., Elliot St.
- Feb. 24 FOODSHARE
- Feb. 27 Grafton St., Broadview Terr.,
Preston St., Adelaide St.
- Feb. 28 Mahl Ave.



**COMMUNITY SERVICE
PROJECT HOTLINE
756-7000
PLEASE CALL WITH
YOUR PROJECT**

**Photos from Laurel Street
Clean-up project
February 2006**

STATE OF CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

COMMUNITY COURT SESSION IN HARTFORD

WWW.JUD.STATE.CT.US

SPRING 2006 NEWSLETTER

IN THIS EDITION...

Helping Vets, Restitution Through Mediation, Staff Notes and Stats, Seven Years of Social Services Success, Court Interns, Young Offenders, and Park Street Photo Exhibit

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