

# State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Community Court Session At Hartford

## SUMMER 2006 News & Updates

Produced by Chris Pleasanton, Vol. 8, Issue 2

## INDIANAPOLIS TEAM VISITS HARTFORD

The Community Court in Hartford was honored to host a June 12 visit by staff from the Indianapolis (Indiana) Community Court led by Commissioner Annie Christ Garcia. One of the national leaders among community court programs in the United States, the Indianapolis Community Court wants to expand its programming for women involved with prostitution and came to see Hartford's Women's Holistic Health program in addition to observing Hartford's regular operations.

The Indianapolis team visited with Judge Jorge Simón, observed a court session, met with the Women's Holistic Health team from Paul & Lisa, Inc., shared a round table lunch with many community court staff, and visited a community service work site.

"Commissioner Christ Garcia and her team are committed to improving the quality of life through their community court in Indianapolis," Judge Simón said. "It was a real pleasure, not only to share our experiences with them, but we also learned a great deal talking shop about their court too."



THE INDIANAPOLIS TEAM IN HARTFORD (L to R) Public Defender Lori Howard, Commissioner Annie Christ-Garcia, Coordinator Tina Thien Hayes, Chris Pleasanton Court Coordinator (Hartford); Kelly Robinson, Court Resource Coordinator; and Kathy Infanger, Deputy Prosecutor

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# COMMUNITY COURT STATISTICS

## SPRING 2006

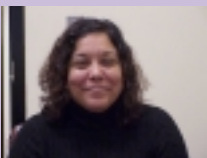
*MAR*

*APR*

*MAY*

	<i>MAR</i>	<i>APR</i>	<i>MAY</i>
Total New Cases	591	687	760
Community Service Hours	1842	2346	2580
Social Services Referrals	128	182	214
Referrals to Mediation	43	85	52
Rate of Compliance	94%	92%	90%
Suburban Caseload	19%	16%	13%

## STAFF NOTES



The Community Court would like to welcome Abby DeJesus of Community Partners in Action, who joined the staff in April as a community service field supervisor.



A fond farewell and best wishes for future success to Liz Bramon, who leaves the Court to work in the private sector. Liz, as an employee of CPA, worked in the Community Court's community service team as an administrative assistant.

## JEAN MCGOWAN OPULSKI

In an effort to bring you behind the scenes at the Community Court in Hartford, we would like to feature some of the staff that isn't normally featured in the newsletter but play no less an important role in making the Court operate successfully.

The first person to be featured in this series is Jean McGowan Opulski. Jean is the Court Monitor, which means she records the court proceedings for the official record and makes transcripts of the audio recording upon request. This can be very important when there is a dispute over what was said in a court hearing.



"Jean does a terrific job and her attention to detail really helps the Community Court operate at peak efficiency," Judge Simón said. "She's well liked by everyone and a very enjoyable person for all of us to work with."

In addition to her professional duties, Jean is currently working towards a law degree with the University of Connecticut. She is also a singer-songwriter who released an album titled "Solo Contendere" in 2003.

# COMMUNITY COURT VISITS YORK CI

Most of the Community Court defendants are male, however; the Court still handles a significant number of cases involving females. While many of the female defendants avail themselves of the Community Court's primary methods of resolving cases through community service and participation in social services programs, some of the women are incarcerated, either by sentencing or by being held for a short period while their case is continued.

When women in Connecticut are incarcerated, they are sent to the York Correctional Institute in Niantic. From lower level offenders to the most serious, York must attend to the different needs of each inmate population not only to maintain security but to enhance the abilities of the inmates to become law-abiding and productive citizens upon release. In an effort to stop the "revolving door" cycle of incarceration many defendants find themselves in, York CI has worked with the Community Court in the past to provide our mutual population of individuals with opportunities available to succeed upon release.

On March 7, Warden Lori Ricks hosted a visit to the York CI by several members of the Community Court staff, including Judge Simón. Warden Ricks and her team showed the Court personnel around the York facilities, including the general population and isolation units, the on-site Marilyn Baker House substance abuse treatment program, and several job programs in the facility from data entry to food preparation.

"York impressed us with its emphasis on rehabilitation and the extensive programming available" Judge Simón said. "I'm impressed with their efforts to help women make a smooth transition back into the community from incarceration."

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## BRINGING PRODUCE TO HARTFORD

In an effort to help make locally grown farm fresh produce available in Hartford, the Community Court in Hartford is working in partnership with the Holcomb Farm in Granby and several Hartford-based social service agencies, including the YWCA's Soromundi Commons and the Hispanic Health Council, to bring the food to in-need persons who cannot normally afford or obtain this food.

Each week, the Community Court sends a few people working on its community service work crews to the Holcomb Farm. There they load the pre-boxed fresh produce onto their truck and then bring it to Hartford, where they deliver it to local social service agencies including the aforementioned Soromundi Commons and Hispanic Health Council, plus the Hispanic Senior Center, Shepard Park, and the Horace Bushnell Congregate Homes. In turn, these agencies provide the produce to socially and economically disadvantaged persons in the community.

"This is a great opportunity to connect people with fresh, healthy food that might not normally be available," Judge Simón said. "Plus, it enhances the types of community service projects we usually work on to help the people of Hartford."

The Community Court will be working on this project from June through late October 2006.

# HELPING TO ADDRESS HUNGER

One of the primary social needs of defendants seen by the staff of the Community Court is a lack of healthy and affordable food. While there are numerous programs to provide for this need, many people have a difficult time navigating the system to obtain the benefits for which they may qualify for. With this in mind, End Hunger Connecticut! has offered to work with the Community Court in Hartford to help defendants obtain food stamps and other food benefits.

End Hunger Connecticut! Is a statewide group that strives to end hunger and address issues of poor nutrition throughout Connecticut, primarily through legislative and administrative advocacy and by performing outreach and public education. End Hunger Connecticut representative Carl Asikainen met with the Community Court's on-site social services team on May 22<sup>nd</sup> to raise its awareness of available food benefit services and to offer assistance in helping eligible defendants obtain these benefits.

For more information on End Hunger Connecticut! Please visit its website at [www.enhungerct.org](http://www.enhungerct.org).

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## COMMUNITY NOTES

### M.A.R.G. MEETING SCHEDULE

The Maple Avenue Revitalization Group's neighborhood meeting schedule for the remainder of 2006 is July 13, September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 14. Each meeting is held in the St. Augustine's Church Hall on Campfield Avenue and begins promptly at 6 p.m.. Community Court representatives attend most of these meeting to report on the Court's activities and to learn about local conditions from neighborhood residents.

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## COMMUNITY COURT CONTACT INFO

Please feel free to email the court with questions or comments at:

[Hartford.Commcourt@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Hartford.Commcourt@jud.ct.gov)

and visit the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch website at:

[www.jud.ct.gov](http://www.jud.ct.gov)

# HISPANIC HEALTH COUNCIL'S NEW MEN'S HOLISTIC HEALTH CLASS

Defendants who come before the Community Court in Hartford on a charge of prostitution are predominantly female, yet, from time to time, males are also arrested for that misdemeanor. While the legal factors involving their cases are similar; the social, psychological, and other personal factors are often very different between men and women.

Because most of the prostitution cases before the court involve female defendants, the Community Court implemented the Women's Holistic Health Program with the assistance of Paul & Lisa, Inc. to address the factors unique to females involved in prostitution. Since 1999, approximately 65 percent of the program's graduates have not returned to the Community Court on a charge of prostitution.

The Community Court realizes men charged with prostitution also have a unique set of issues that may prevent them from breaking from that lifestyle. Failure to do so often leads them further into dangerous behavioral patterns that jeopardize their physical and mental health and potentially increase their future involvement with the criminal justice system.

In an effort to help these men, Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton has worked with Hartford's Hispanic Health Council to provide a Men's Holistic Health Program at the court. The Hispanic Health Council is a non-profit agency that provides a wide array of social and educational services to Hartford-area residents, including the Orgullo program, which provides HIV prevention services for Latino homosexual men through a combination of education and culturally sensitive care and support.

Utilizing many of the same principles of the Orgullo program, the Hispanic Health Council has devised a four-session educational curriculum for male prostitutes that will focus on the physical and mental health issues, as well as the personal and social factors of their situation, in an effort to lead them away from a life of prostitution. In addition to participating in the classes (which are free to participants and the court alike), males charged with prostitution are often incarcerated for a brief period of time and are mandated to perform 10 days of court-supervised community service and undergo mandatory STD (non-HIV) testing through the City of Hartford's Department of Health and Human Services in order to resolve their case in Community Court.

The Men's Holistic Health Program, which started on May 1, 2006, is conducted by Hispanic Health Council Facilitator Luis Feliciano each Monday afternoon at the Community Court. For more information on the Hispanic Health Council and its programs please visit its website at [www.hispanichealth.com](http://www.hispanichealth.com).

# SGT. HIGHTOWER'S JUVENILE GANG PRESENTATION



Hartford Police Sergeant Emory Hightower recently made a presentation about juvenile gang activity in Hartford to the Community Court staff. Sgt. Hightower discussed aspects of the numerous gangs, including their locations, activities, identifying clothing, and rivalries with other gangs.

"We appreciate Sgt. Hightower making the time to share his knowledge of how gang activity is impacting Hartford's neighborhoods," Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton said. "He significantly raised our awareness of this issue."



Pictured (top left) Sgt. Emory Hightower making his presentation and (bottom left) a display of some of the identifying bandanas and insignias worn by gang-affiliated person in Hartford.

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## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AT WESTFIELD

There are many aspects within the study of criminal justice, from forensics to psychological profiling to community-based justice. Among the many criminal justice concepts, one which reflects a major part of the community court philosophy is restorative justice. Restorative justice involves the use of accountability and opportunity by the courts to restore individuals and communities affected by criminal activity. At the Community Court in Hartford, a form of restorative justice is practiced when the Court requires defendants to perform community service to "pay back" the community for the crime they have committed, while, at the same time, defendants have the opportunity to address the social needs they may be facing by accessing the Court's on-site social services team.

The concept of restorative justice is being taught at Westfield State College near Springfield. Professor Tom Roscoe, who teaches the Westfield restorative justice classes, researched the Community Court in Hartford and invited Court Coordinator Chris Pleasanton to speak to his classes and talk about how restorative justice concepts are put into practice in a functioning court.

"It is exciting to see restorative justice being taught on the undergraduate level," Mr. Pleasanton said. "Many of the Westfield students had insightful questions that show me they are taking this concept to heart and will utilize it as they pursue careers in criminal justice."

# Spring 2006 COMMUNITY SERVICE

## WORK SITES

### **MARCH**

March 1 Orange St., Hazel St., Francis Ave.  
March 2 South St.  
March 3 FOODSHARE  
March 6 Mahl Ave.  
March 7 Sergeant St., Nelson St., Acton St.,  
Clark St., Brook St., Bedford St.,  
Westland St., Guilford St., Barbour St.  
March 8 Nelton Court  
March 9 Broad St.  
March 10 FOODSHARE, Vine St.  
March 13 Mahl Ave., Broadview Terr.,  
Grafton St., Sherbrooke Ave.  
March 14 Bowles Park  
March 15 Hudson St., Park St.  
March 16 Hillside Ave.  
March 17 Russ St., Putnam St.  
March 20 Putnam St.  
March 21 Ancient Burial Ground  
March 22 Otis St., Bushnell St.  
March 23 Nelton Court  
March 24 Madison St., Lincoln St.  
March 27 New Britain Ave.  
March 28 Capen St.  
March 29 Garden St.  
March 30 Vine St., Albany Ave.  
March 31 Wethersfield Ave., Maple Ave.

### **APRIL**

April 3 Park St., Francis Ave.  
April 4 Barbour St., Westland St.,  
Clark St.  
April 5 Charter Oak Ave.  
April 6 Sherbrooke Ave.  
April 7 Bushnell St.

April 10 Northend HPD substation, Vine St.,  
Hillside Ave., Albany Ave., Park St.,  
Hudson St., Wethersfield Ave.,  
Maple Ave., Garden St.  
April 11 Orange St., Hazel St., Cherry St.,  
Chadwick St., Newton St., Park St.,  
Sisson Ave., South St., Broad St.,  
Jefferson St., Ward St., Garden St.,  
Grand St., Russ St.  
April 12 Nelton Court  
April 13 Capen St., Madison Ave., Allen Pl.,  
Lincoln St., Broad St.,  
New Britain Ave.  
April 14 Shultas Pl.  
April 17 Wethersfield Ave., Franklin Ave.,  
Bond St.  
April 18 Broad St.  
April 19 Park St., Sisson Ave.  
April 20 Asylum Ave.  
April 21 Sergeant St., Nelson St., Clark St.  
April 24 Brook St., Bedford St.  
April 25 Putnam St.  
April 26 Hillside Ave.  
April 27 New Britain Ave.  
April 28 Bowles Park

### **MAY**

May 1 Russ St., Putnam St., South Green park,  
Lawrence St., Babcock St., Park St., Ward St.,  
Affleck St., Grand St., Marshall St.,  
S. Marshall St., Atwood St., Townley St.,  
Willard St. Collins St., Sumner St., Case St.,  
Huntington St.  
May 2 Brook St., Guilford St., Pliny St., Mather St.,  
Winter St., Fairmont St.  
May 3 Park St., Orange St., Cherry St.  
May 4 Mahl Ave., Bethel St., Green St., Winter St.,  
Liberty St., Edwards St., Willimas St.  
May 5 FOODSHARE, Broad St., Grand St., Park St.,  
Allen Pl., Lincoln St., Madison St., Ward St.,  
Jefferson St., Putnam St., Babcock St.,  
Russ St., Lawrence St.

May 8 New Britain Ave., Monroe St., East St.,  
Elliot St., Ledyard St., Whitmore St.,  
Bernard St.  
May 9 Grand St., Park St.  
May 10 Bowles Park  
May 11 Benton St., Wethersfield Ave.  
May 12 Maple St., Bond St.  
May 15 Sisson Ave., Park St.  
May 16 Orange St., Cherry St.,  
South Green park  
May 17 Asylum Ave.  
May 18 Nelton Court  
May 19 Shultas Pl.  
May 22 Broad St., Russ St., Park St.,  
Grand St., Babcock St.  
May 23 Capen St., Madison St., Lincoln St.,  
Allen Pl., Broad St., New Britain Ave.  
May 24 Evergreen St., Fales St., Willard Ave.,  
Owens St., Townley St., Frederick St.,  
Denison St.  
May 25 New Britain Ave.  
May 26 FOODSHARE  
May 30 Whitmore St., Park St.  
May 31 Franklin Ave., Bond St., Elliot St.,  
Bond St.

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

STATE OF CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

**COMMUNITY COURT  
SESSION IN HARTFORD**

[WWW.JUD.STATE.CT.US](http://WWW.JUD.STATE.CT.US)

**SUMMER 2006 NEWSLETTER**

IN THIS EDITION...

*Indianapolis Community Court staff visits Hartford, HPD juvenile gang presentation, End Hunger, CT, York CI tour, Men's Holistic Health program, Restorative Justice at Westfield State College, stats and staff notes and more....*

State of Connecticut Superior Court  
Community Court Session in Hartford  
80 Washington Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

