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Seattle Community Court News

Seattle Team Visits Vancouver's Downtown Community Court

By Bob Hood,

On September 10, 2008, following an intensive three year development effort, Vancouver's Downtown Community Court opened for business as the first community court in Canada. Seattle Municipal Judge Fred Bonner, Seattle City Attorney Thomas Carr, and I had an opportunity to travel to Vancouver recently to take a detailed look at this newest experiment in problem-solving justice. We came away very impressed.

Serving the downtown core of Vancouver from the West End and Stanley Park, through the Central Business District, to the Downtown Eastside, the Downtown Community Court has jurisdiction over all but the most serious offenses known to Canadian criminal law. It applies a problem-solving focus and features community service, social services mandates, and many of the other features present in community courts located elsewhere around the world.

The Courthouse, housed in the former downtown pretrial detention facility, has been smartly decorated and comfortably blends into its Downtown Eastside neighborhood. The two courtrooms are designed to maximize the use of the available space, improve the gallery's ability to see and hear the proceedings, and minimize the space separation between the defendant, the attorneys, and the judge. The end result is a courtroom that has a sense of intimacy not normally associated with a traditional courtroom.

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Meet the Lawyers of Seattle Community Court

By Eunice Yang, AmeriCorps Team

You'll probably never mistake them for the lawyers on NBC's *Law & Order*, but the lawyers of Seattle Community Court can be just as entertaining and interesting as their fictional television counterparts. Though they may not always agree, their collaborative spirit helps to make this innovative court program a success for defendants, the community, and the justice system.



Assistant City Attorney Tuere Sala and ACA
Defense Attorney Nancy Waldman

Tuere Sala has served as the primary prosecutor for Seattle Community Court since the spring of 2007. A graduate of Franklin High School in Seattle, Tuere obtained her B.A in Humanities from LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee and her law degree from the University of Kansas. From 1992 to 1999, she served as a prosecutor with the City of Kansas City, Missouri Prosecutor's Office and the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office. No newcomer to innovation, she served as a drug court prosecutor, neighborhood prosecutor, and asset forfeiture attorney while there. She returned to Seattle in

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We had an opportunity to watch portions of both the morning and afternoon court sessions, presided over by Judge Tom Gove. You could immediately tell you were in another country’s legal system and culture where the provincial prosecution is referred to as the “Crown”, opposing counsel refer to each other as “my friend”, and people customarily bow slightly towards the bench whenever they cross the bar.

We were struck however, by how Vancouver had incorporated so many of the common features of community courts, yet placed their unique signature on it in keeping with local custom, culture, and needs. We also noted that defendants appearing there seemed uncannily familiar, sharing many of the same kinds of problems as defendants do in Seattle, San Diego, Portland, or Midtown Manhattan. Problems like mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, and poverty were at the core of why many of these defendants ended up before the court.

In addition to viewing court sessions and touring the entire facility, we also had an opportunity to discuss over lunch some of the project’s challenges and opportunities with Judge Gove, British Columbia Attorney General Wally Opal, and some of the other key members of their team. They described to us how they were building the effort with the hopes of handling up to 1,500 cases per year. As is always the case with these visits, we came away from the experience with some new ideas and hopefully left them with some as well.

We feel a close affinity to the Vancouver effort, given that three separate waves of their development team visited Seattle to learn from our startup experiences. They are off to a great start and we expect to hear great things from them in the future. We would like to thank our hosts for a highly informative and enjoyable visit. To learn more about the Vancouver Downtown Community Court, you can go its website at communitycourt.bc.ca.

Breaking News:

Sometime during October of this year, defendants of the Seattle Community Court Program completed their **25,000th** hour of community service since the inception of the program in March, 2005.

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2000 and joined the City Attorney’s Office in early 2001. From late 2002 through 2006, she served as the Precinct Liaison Attorney for the South and Southwest Precincts. She jumped at the opportunity to join the community court team in April of last year.

Nancy Waldman serves as the primary defense counsel in Seattle Community Court. She took up that role in February of 2008 on behalf of Associated Counsel for the Accused, the primary public defender agency serving Seattle Municipal Court. Raised in Florida, she received her law degree from Georgetown University in Washington D.C. and practiced law for several years with ACA before taking a sabbatical to raise her two daughters. During that sabbatical, she served as a judge pro tem, served as a mediator in a victim-offender restorative justice program, and was an active board member for many school organizations and non-profits. She returned to ACA assisting in Community Court in the fall of 2007. When the primary defense counsel role became available, she jumped at the chance to be involved.

Both Tuere and Nancy strongly support the community court concept, and each views their own involvement as a way to give back to the community they are a part of. Tuere believes that it is important that defendants take responsibility and give back to the

community through community service. Nancy believes that the “Community Court allows participants to experience the power of helping others, regain some dignity and self-respect, and start over with their lives.” The Community Court Team thanks and applauds both of them for their important contributions to this effort.

CCI: A Name to Know in the Community Court Movement

By Jeff Atwood & Bob Hood

Seattle Community Court is part of a broader community court and problem-solving justice movement that has rapidly spread across the United States and the world in the last fifteen years. No organization has been more important to this movement than the Center for Court Innovation, known to most as CCI. From humble beginnings, CCI has grown to become the foremost authority on how to design, implement, operate, and evaluate a community court.

CCI grew out of the development of the first community court in the nation Midtown Community Court, which opened in New York City in 1993. The project’s success led the court’s planners, with the support of New York State’s Chief Judge Judith Kaye, to establish the Center for Court Innovation to serve as an engine for ongoing court reform in New York. The Center functions as the state court system’s independent research and development think tank, creating demonstration projects that test new ideas. The Center’s projects have included the creation of community courts, drug courts, reentry courts, domestic violence courts, mental health courts, and work on court technology.

In the process, CCI has also become a technical assistance powerhouse that has spanned the globe helping other jurisdictions bring their community court planning efforts to fruition. CCI served as the technical assistance

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provider to the ten jurisdictions, including Seattle, that were part of the United States Department of Justice’s *Community Based Problem Solving Criminal Justice Initiatives* grant program, the grant that led to Seattle’s Community Court’s expansion in 2007. The fingerprint of Julius Lang, the Director of Technical Assistance at the Center, is on many of the community courts currently operating or being planned. Lang’s efforts played an important part in the design of the Seattle program in 2005 and were readily evident in our recent visit to the Vancouver British Columbia Downtown Community Court.

Through these efforts and others, CCI has played an important role in helping to spread and institutionalize the principles of problem-solving justice. In part as a result of those efforts, there are now more than 2,500 problem-solving courts in the U.S, including over thirty community courts and nearly 2,000 drug courts.

To learn more about the Center for Court Innovation story and its many groundbreaking projects, you can visit their website at courtinnovation.org.

Meet the Probation Monitors of Seattle Community Court

By Mark Braseth, AmeriCorps Team

A common feature in many community courts is a unique position known as a court monitor. Although one could easily mistake this position as a traditional probation officer, in a problem solving court this position takes on a key role. Part counselor, mentor, disciplinarian, social services broker, community service coordinator, needs assessor, and team player, this is the person on the community court team that in some ways has the greatest interpersonal impact on defendants coming through the court. Though they go by different names in the various community courts around the nation and the roles are sometimes split up across multiple people, most problem solving

courts could not function without them. Seattle Municipal Court is fortunate to have two great probation court monitors, Jason Pina and Kent Hay. Jason moved to Seattle from his native Texas in 2005, after earning his undergraduate degree from the University of Texas. He joined the Seattle Municipal Court Probation Services Division shortly thereafter, working as a regular probation officer. He began working in the Seattle Community Court in October of 2007.



Seattle Community Court Probation Monitors
Kent Hay and Jason Pina

When Jason reflects back on his first year with Seattle Community Court, he says that he has enjoyed the challenges of working with this population of defendants that requires a different approach. “I like helping our defendants to learn and appreciate the new and different avenues of change that are afforded to them through this court”.

Jason has witnessed the effectiveness of the Community Court approach firsthand. “Many of our defendants have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by Community Court to effectively make changes in their lives,” he says. Defendants often tell him that they are grateful for the opportunity. He also feels that further indications of the program’s success is evidenced by the fact that many return to the Court Resources Center to receive further aid to reduce their chances of re-offending even after their cases are closed.

Kent Hay was just recently selected to serve as Seattle Community Court’s second Probation Court Monitor. Kent moved to Seattle from his hometown, San Bernardino, California, after graduating from California State

University-San Bernardino in 1999. Once here he reports, he worked a variety of jobs from retail and undercover security officer to case management and a teacher’s aide.

In 2001, he accepted a position at the Monroe Correctional Complex as a Correctional Mental Health Counselor. In 2004, he joined the staff of Seattle Municipal Court, as part of the Mental Health Court staff. After a short relocation to California, he returned to Seattle in December of 2007 to work for the King County District Court’s Probation Department. This June, he returned to Seattle Municipal Court as a Domestic Violence Probation Counselor.

Kent enjoys being able to provide individual case management in his new role in Seattle Community Court. He feels that this role gives him a greater opportunity to have an impact on the individuals he serves. “Community Court lets probation be more effective and engaging with these individuals and helps promote change,” he says. “My experience thus far has been great, and I look forward to being part of such a great team of people who all share the same vision.”

Defendant *Robert R.* talks about Jason Pina and Kent Hay at his recent “successful completion” ceremony in Seattle Community Court:

“I just want to say that the people involved, Kent and Jason, were very professional and treated me with a lot of respect. I think it’s a great program because you know I got a little bit off the track and they helped me get back on track and it helps to have all the services together so you don’t have to run around from here and there and everything. I hope the program can continue so that other people can have the same chance.”

Spotlight on "In their own words"

Defendants comment on their community service and community court experience at their "successful completion" ceremonies:

"I enjoyed the work at Emergency Feeding Program. The volunteer coordinator was very nice. I didn't know I would enjoy it so much. I am going in next week on my days off to help of my own free will, they need a lot of help right now."

Nicolas B.

"I think I got to say it's a good program. Jason helped me with a lot of the problems that I had. I was able to contact places that I needed to get contacted with. Now I can move on with my life in a better position."

Donald S.

"It gave me a chance to see things from a whole different perspective. Actually working through the Compass Center and this program, I think its ideal for a lot of people in different situations rather than to penalize them in the jail system as much, they can maybe get a look at some of the problems with a failing society. It really helped me, it really opened up my eyes."

Mark L.

I found it a rewarding way for me to help others, watching the senior citizens come in early in the morning like me. It's the giving thing, everyone was happy. I had all that energy, put it towards something. Helping others is great. I'm going to go in there, they told me I can come in and help anytime when I wanted to. Keeps me busy when I don't have anything else to do. So that's what I'm going to start doing.

Dianna S.

It was a lot of work. When I'm drinking my common sense goes out the window. I'm in an impatient alcohol treatment program now.

Alex O.

Community Court: A Public Defense Perspective

By Nancy Waldman, ACA Attorney

Imagine you're sitting in a small windowless room, wearing a red jumpsuit and handcuffs. You've been through the revolving door of the County Jail countless times, having been arrested for trespassing in the park because you have no other place to go. You've been homeless for years due to mental illness or drug addiction. You expect to do your time yet again and then be released, only to repeat the endless cycle.

Now imagine a woman comes in and tells you about a "court different from any you've ever seen before", a "helping court," set up to "help you help yourself." She says, "Everyone in the courtroom is part of a team that cares about you and we're all here to help you succeed. When you succeed, we succeed." Would that get your attention?

I hope so, because that's how I introduce Community Court to my in-custody clients. I go on to explain that (1) if they did what they're charged with and want to take responsibility by pleading guilty, (2) if they're ready to pay back the community by performing community service, and (3) if they're willing to make contacts with agencies which can help with underlying needs at the root of their behavior, their case can be closed within two weeks and we'll all celebrate. I love watching their expressions change from despair to incredulity to hope. I love hearing them ask, "You mean someone could really help me get housing? Or treatment? You'll really celebrate me?" I love being able to say yes.

The Community Court concept is an enlightened and powerful one. It offers a real win-win scenario for dealing with some of society's most marginalized chronic low-level offenders. First, these folks get the chance to regain some dignity and self-respect, along with the chance to start over. Second, they get resources they desperately need in order to change their behavior. Third, the

community benefits from the many hours of community service they do, reduced jail costs, and the likelihood of lowered recidivism when underlying social needs are addressed. Finally, the people who staff Community Court get to work in a setting in which we leave traditional adversarial roles behind to become collaborative partners with a single goal of helping participants change their lives and improve our city.

Community Court is not for everyone. Some people decline to enter or are determined to not be eligible for a variety of reasons. Not everyone manages to meet all of the conditions imposed, especially the first time through. For some, the inner demons are just too strong and they end up serving the short period of confinement that is the sanction for noncompliance. These are the ones who can break our hearts. But when we celebrate the "graduation" of our "completers" with a handshake, a certificate, a gavel pencil, a round of applause, and a photo, those smiles say it all. It's as if they won the Nobel Prize. I can't speak for the rest of the team, but that's kind of how I feel, too.

"Red Wagon" Program Wipes Out Football Field Sized Area of Graffiti

By Mark Braseth

On Saturday, October 25th, five pretrial diversion defendants monitored through the Seattle Community Court Program reported to a City of Seattle facility to begin a chapter in community service. It was the inaugural day of the City's "Red Wagon Graffiti Removal Program". Headed by Seattle Public Utilities' Anthony Matlock and Daniel Sims, the program gets permission from private property owners to paint out illegal graffiti on their property.

The effort was a smashing success. Matlock reports that the assembled team painted out "a football field sized area" of graffiti in West, East and North Seattle. The effort was so successful that he wants to become a regular

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partner with Seattle Community Court, which will refer diversion participants to work every second and fourth Saturday of each month from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Transportation, training, and supplies are provided by the Seattle Public Utilities Department.

The Seattle Public Utilities' graffiti removal program is thus one of the Community Court's newest partners, and its goal is to significantly reduce graffiti vandalism across the city. AmeriCorps Team members Eunice Yang and Mark Braseth were present to support the effort and the defendants and monitor their compliance with their community service mandates.

Seattle Community Court Welcomes the 2008-2009 AmeriCorps Team

By Stephanie Tschida

Every fall, the Seattle City Attorney's Office brings in a new team of primary AmeriCorps members to assist the Seattle Community Court partnership. AmeriCorps is a national service entity that works to enrich peoples' lives through community service. Members of the primary team begin their service in September and work to through the following July. These AmeriCorps team members are vitally important to helping Seattle Community Court defendants to be successful and taking the Community Court Program to the next level. They are collectively responsible for helping to monitor defendant compliance with community service mandates, participating in new and ongoing projects that help support the program, inputting court data, and a variety of other tasks essential to keeping this program moving forward. This year's primary team includes:

Jeff Atwood, who was born, raised, and educated in Ohio. After obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Capital University in Bexley, Ohio, Jeff moved to Chicago to complete an internship with UNITE HERE, a hotel and restaurant union.

Hoping for a fresh start in a new city, Jeff moved to Seattle in 2006.

Considering law school in his future, he saw a great opportunity to complete his AmeriCorps year with Seattle Community Court.

Mark Braseth, who is a native of West Seattle. He is a recent graduate of Washington State University with two Bachelor of Arts degrees in Political Science and Communications. Also contemplating law school, his interest in the criminal justice system and national service made working with the Seattle Community Court program through AmeriCorps a perfect fit.

Eunice Yang, who was born in Korea and raised in Lynwood, Washington. She graduated from University of Washington in 2004 with a Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics. After much soul searching, Eunice quit her job at the University of Washington Radiology Department and joined AmeriCorps to support positive change in the criminal justice system.



AmeriCorps Primary Team Members Jeff Atwood, Eunice Yang, and Mark Braseth

The Seattle Community Court team also gets great support from the work of its AmeriCorps Links members. LINKS is a program of the Northwest Service Academy that provides part-time national service opportunities in the environment, in education, and in public safety. People who participate agree to do 300, 450, 675, 900, or 1700 hours of service that typically take place within a year or less. LINKS members are at least 17 years of age (no upper age limit) and serve at least 25 hours per month with a LINKS partner school, non-profit, or government agency. Members earn an education award of

from \$1,000 to \$4,725 dependant upon number of hours of service completed.

Our AmeriCorps Links team members assist and support the efforts of the primary AmeriCorps team and engage in shorter term, special project work in support of the Community Court Program. This year's AmeriCorps Links members include:

Toshiko Hasegawa, who is a Seattle native and a graduate of Garfield High School. She is currently majoring in Criminal Justice and Spanish at Seattle University. Toshiko spent a year in Costa Rica to study Spanish and experience family dynamics in a different cultural setting. She has participated in programs such as Garfield High School's Cultural Relations, Sexual Assault Awareness, and Seattle Youth Involvement Network. Toshiko joined AmeriCorps to "take responsibility as a young and capable citizen" to promote positive change.

Leila Mende, who was born in Kentucky and raised in Hawaii. Leila made her way to the Northwest in 2002 to pursue an international studies degree at the UW. In her quest to explore different social and political environments, Leila has studied and worked in Israel and Ghana. In the past, she has volunteered with Horn of Africa Services, the African Chamber of Commerce, and UW's campus radio station. She joined the AmeriCorps LINKS program in 2008 to learn more about restorative justice and the local court system.

Tomilyn Rupert, who graduated a year early as the valedictorian from Seattle's Aviation High School inaugural class of 2007. She is currently a junior at the University of Washington working towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in both Anthropology and English Literature & Language. She hopes to join the Peace Corps after graduation before heading to law school. Her commitment to community service and social change perfectly matched with Seattle Community Court.

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All of the AmeriCorps team members who work to support the Seattle Community Court Program share a common interest in social and restorative justice. They have come to us to learn more about this unique and innovative problem-solving court, and in the process, help improve the criminal justice system. Sharing a passion for our communities, they are eager to contribute their time and energy to a program that thinks "outside of the box" as it helps to bring peace and justice to our city.

Coleman Neighborhood Association Honored at September CAB Meeting

By Stephanie Tschida

If you were to stroll by a historic 100 year old farm-style house in the Colman Neighborhood on a Saturday morning, you might see a table covered with a vintage cloth, laden with coffee mugs and teacups, with a pot of tea and coffee brewing nearby. Sometimes there are even muffins or doughnuts. You might also see Grace Reamer and her husband, Kevin Bose and sometimes neighbor Meg Olsen, standing by to welcome volunteers who arrive to help in the neighborhood cleanup. If you do, you are seeing the Colman Neighborhood Association's Litter Patrol at work.

in the neighborhood. It began its existence as a block watch in 1999. In 2002, it joined the City's Adopt a Street Program with monthly litter patrols. In 2005 it formalized as a neighborhood association and now supports the Litter Patrol, neighborhood beautification efforts, a welcome committee, and several annual events including *National Night Out*, a neighborhood-wide yard sale, a Town Meeting, and neighborhood retreat.

Every first and third Saturday at 9:00 a.m., Community Court Program pretrial diversion defendants arrive to assist in the litter patrol and community beautification efforts and "give back" to the community through community service. These first time offenders are often awkward as they arrive, embarrassed by the mistake they have made and unsure of the consequences that await them on so bright and early on a Saturday morning. Soon, however, the awkwardness disappears as Grace, Kevin, or Meg graciously offer them refreshments as they thank them for helping to beautify their neighborhood. They tell them how keeping their neighborhood clean has made a positive impact on the quality of life of the residents and that would not be possible without the help of Seattle Community Court.

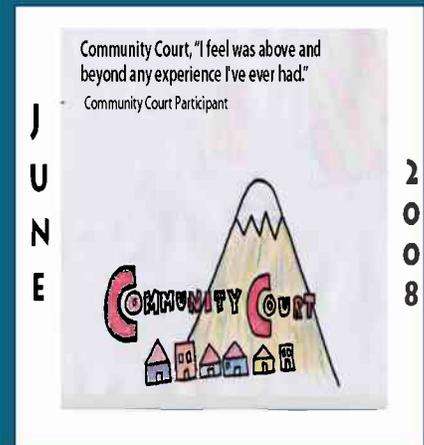
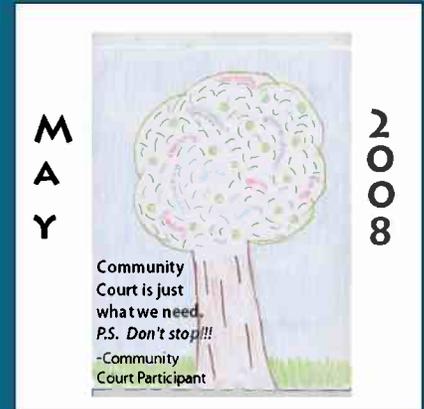
Colman Neighborhood Association was recognized recently with a Community Partner Appreciation Award of Seattle Community Court at the September meeting of the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB). In making the award, City Attorney Tom Carr noted the above efforts of Grace, Kevin, and others to improve the neighborhood and provide a positive community service experience for Seattle Community Court Program defendants.

The Colman Neighbors was one of Seattle Community Court's first community partnerships and one which continues to benefit both the pretrial diversion defendants and the neighborhood. We are extremely grateful to have the support of such a dedicated group of community activists. To learn more about the Colman

Neighborhood Association go to <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/commnty/CNA/default.htm>.

Spotlight on Defendant Artwork

In December of 2007, the Seattle Community Court AmeriCorps team began collecting artwork, poetry, and ideas from defendants performing community service at its Belltown Service Site. Some of that artwork is now featured in a day calendar that is provided to



Community Court Program defendants doing community service with Colman Neighbors

The Colman Neighborhood Association is a group of 120+ active households located between Martin Luther King Jr. Way and 23rd Ave. South, and S. Jackson and Massachusetts Street whose goal is to build community and improve public safety and quality of life

By the Numbers: Seattle Community Court Stats

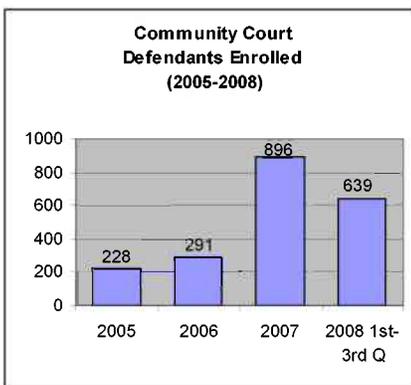
By Bob Hood

In the last newsletter we reported statistics for Seattle Community Court through the end of 2007. The impacts of court's expansion continue to be felt in 2008. During the first nine months of the 2008, an additional 639 defendants

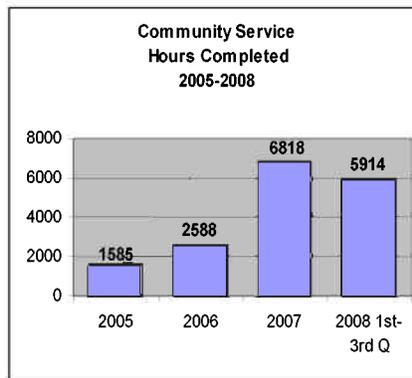
Breaking News:

Sometime during October of this year, the 2,000th defendant to enter the Seattle Community Court Program since its start in March, 2005.

entered Seattle Community Court and they completed over 5,900 hours of community service. They also made nearly 950 court-mandated social services contacts. If this year's numbers continue to hold during the 4th Quarter, we will easily break last year's record for community service hours completed and social services contacts made. If the last quarter's numbers hold, we will also likely break last year's record for number of defendants opting into Community Court.



Combined through the 3rd Quarter of 2008, the Seattle Community Court effort has generated nearly 17,000 hours of community service since 2005 and resulted in nearly 2,700 linkages with social services to be made by defendants appearing in the court.



As a result of the implementation of changes to the pretrial diversion program last year, an additional 1,192 defendants completed over 8,400 hours community service through the Community Court Program through the 3rd Quarter of this year. All told, over 25,000 hours of community service have been completed.

Seattle City Attorney Wins Coveted Community Prosecution Award

By Bob Hood

On October 8, 2008, Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr won the coveted *Iceberg Award* from the National District Attorney's Association for great achievements in community prosecution. The award was made to Carr at the 4th Annual National Community Prosecution Conference held in St. Louis, Missouri, where he delivered a luncheon keynote address.

In making the award, NDAA National Center for Community Prosecution Director Steven Jansen noted Carr's commitment to problem solving justice innovations within his office including its Precinct Liaison Program, its involvement with Seattle Community Court, Seattle Mental Health Court, the Domestic Violence Court, and its recent award of a USDOJ technical assistance grant to replicate the *Highpoint Drug Market Initiative*. The award to Carr was the first to be made to a City Attorney.

The Iceberg award honors significant individual contributions to the field of community prosecution. Former

Upcoming Events

1st & 3rd Saturdays
 9am-1pm, 803 24th Avenue South
 Colman Neighbors Association

Litter Patrol and other revitalization activities in the Colman community.

2nd Saturdays
 9am-1pm, 2414 Beacon Ave S.
 Beacon Alliance of Neighbors

Continuing neighborhood restoration project on Beacon Hill.

2nd & 4th Saturdays
 9 AM -1PM, 3633 E Marginal Way S,
 Red Wagon Program

Citywide graffiti paint-outs.

2nd & 4th Tuesdays and Thursdays
 9am-4pm- 5950 4th Ave S
 St. Vincent DePaul

Food and Clothing bank support, repacking and distributing food

Every Wednesday and Thursday
 9:15am - 4pm 2515 Western Avenue
 Belltown Clean-up Project.

Community clean-up in the Belltown neighborhood.

3rd Tuesday
 9am-4pm, 4210 SW Oregon St.
 West Seattle Junction Association.

Ongoing neighborhood improvement project in West Seattle.

The Seattle Community Court Program is always looking to develop new community service partnerships with neighborhood groups, business associations, and other non-profit or government agencies. If you are aware of any such opportunities, please contact Stephanie Tschida, at (206) 684-7731 or by emailing her at

Stephanie.Tschida@seattle.gov

notable winners of the award include Multnomah County District Attorney Michael Strunck, former Denver District Attorney (and now Colorado Governor) Bill Ritter, and former U.S.

Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder. The Seattle City Attorney's Office Precinct Liaison Program was previously recognized with a jurisdiction achievement award in

community prosecution at the Third National Community Prosecution Conference held in October of 2005 in San Diego, California.



