

Highlights in this Issue

1 Seattle Community Court News Debuts

Collaborative Effort Spawns State's First Community Court

2 Taking it to Scale: the USDOJ Grant

3 Community Service Sites

4 Seattle Municipal Court's Resource Center

Spotlight on the Belltown Community Service Site

5 Spotlight on Court Participant Artwork

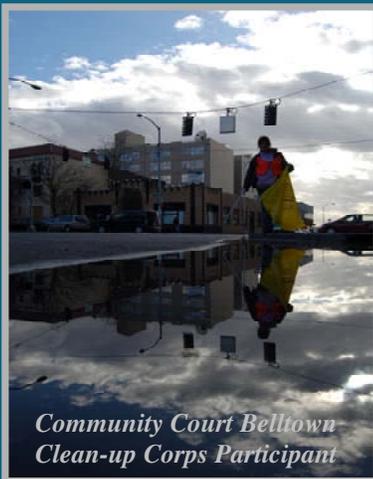
Seattle Community Court People Make it Work

6 Seattle Community Court Salutes the 2007-2008 AmeriCorps Team

7 Spotlight on "In Their Own Words"

Seattle Community Court by the Numbers

8 Coming Attractions



*Community Court Belltown
Clean-up Corps Participant*

Photo by Andrew Sontag

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Seattle Community Court News

Seattle Community Court News Debuts

*By Presiding Judge Ron Mamiya &
City Attorney Tom Carr, Seattle
Community Court Executive Committee*

Welcome to *Court News*, the official newsletter of the Seattle Community Court. Started in March of 2005, this specialized calendar of the Seattle Municipal Court has in three short years, grown from a pilot project into a national model on how to take a community court to scale.

Leveraging the benefits of a United States Department of Justice grant and an abundance of creative partnerships with community and business groups, government agencies, and social service providers, the Community Court program is now positioned to annually adjudicate more than 1,800 low-risk, quality-of-life offenders, generate more than 18,000 hours of community service to neighborhoods affected by crime, and help defendants make thousands of social service linkages designed to reduce their recycling through the criminal justice system.

In this inaugural issue, we describe how this remarkable undertaking took place, what some of Seattle Community Court's key features are, what some of its important outcomes have been, and shine a spotlight on a few of the many features and people that make this court such a unique place. In future editions we will continue to tell the Seattle Community Court story, provide updates on the court's operations, and share information with you on the broader community court movement across the United States and around the world. We look forward to publishing future editions on a regular basis.

Collaborative Effort Spawns State's First Community Court

*By Hon. Fred Bonner, Founding
Member of Seattle Community Court*

The Seattle Community Court was conceived on a wish, a hope, and a shoestring. The wish was that we could use problem-solving court principles to design a court calendar that would be more effective at dealing with low-risk, quality-of-life offenders who recycled through the criminal justice system. The hope was that defendants, by completing community service and making needed social services linkages, would commit fewer crimes and require less usage of expensive jail beds to sanction their criminal behavior. The shoestring was the limited amount of financial and human resources that we had available to make this thing happen. But, where there is a will, there is a way.

The general idea of having a community court had been around Seattle for some time, but the lack of a clear vision and purpose failed to make it happen. The downtown community was generally supportive of the idea as a means to deal with quality-of-life offenders. We had been monitoring from afar the successes of Midtown Manhattan Community Court and the Community Court in Portland, Oregon for some time and had been exploring the notion of how we could apply community court principles in Seattle.

In the summer of 2004, I took a team from Seattle Municipal Court down to Portland to see their community court in action. We came away very impressed with what we saw. That trip was

followed up with another one of City Attorney Tom Carr and Bob Hood, Chief of City Attorney’s Office Public & Community Safety Division. Not long after, Dave Chapman, Director of Associated Counsel for the Accused, the city’s primary public defense provider in Municipal Court, and Dave Dillman of the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) went down and took a look. As a result of these trips, some further discussions, and examining information from other community courts around the country, we all agreed that the time for a community court in Seattle had come.

We then set upon an intense six month, collaborative planning effort designed to create a pilot community court. Tapping the talents of Bob White, the Chief Clerk of the Court and Lorri Cox, a senior court Strategic Advisor, the Center for Court Innovation in New York, contacts we had made at Portland’s Community Court and many others from each of our agencies, we set about to develop the procedures, forms, and processes needed to support the new community court calendars. We also enlisted the assistance of the retail businesses by way of the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) and Street Outreach Services (SOS) to help develop community service sites for defendants to complete their community service obligations.

Data from our regular court’s operations caused us to initially focus on a relatively small number of repeat low-risk, quality-of-life offenders in the downtown core who were recycling through the criminal justice system and using a disproportionate number of expensive jail days as a result. The City Attorney’s Office agreed to recommend community court for such in-custody defendants who were not current public safety risks. Defendants who choose to opt into Community Court would be required to perform community service and to make contact with social service providers based on a social services needs assessment completed for each defendant. Those that failed to comply were to be sanctioned by short jail terms of 5, 10, or 15 days based on a sentencing grid developed with a

Community Advisory Board that provided input to the project. Undaunted by the lack of additional new city resources to get the court up and running, we scrounged around for existing resources as best we could. I agreed to preside over these extra calendars myself, Tom Carr and Bob Hood themselves served as the prosecutors, and Dave Chapman and one of his supervising attorneys, Karen Murray, provided representation to the defendants. We enlisted an existing Probation Officer, Robert Lee, to serve as the in-court community court probation monitor. The DSA provided critical, short-term bridge funding to help get the project off the ground.

With the plans in place, we opened the pilot Community Court in March of 2005, the first such court in the State of Washington and the 26th in the nation. During its pilot phase, we operated Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. By the end of 2005, we had learned a lot, had adjudicated nearly 230 defendants in community court, and had seen them complete over 1,500 hours of service to the community and make hundreds of social service linkages. Perhaps just as important, we proved to ourselves and others around the City that it could be done. It could not have happened without a lot of work and commitment from a lot of people.

Many around the country complain that it is impossible to start a community court without a lot of new positions, money, and other resources. Those things certainly make it easier. I am convinced, however, based on our own experience, that starting such a court is as much a matter of having the political will to make it happen: to be willing to use what you have; to have the tenacity to get what you need through creative partnering; and in the end, not being afraid of trying to do something new if you know it is the right thing to do.

“I feel that the Community Court Program is a great program and the community service really makes a difference. It is a real pleasure to know and feel that you’re making a difference in the community.”
– Community Court Participant

Taking it to Scale: the USDOJ Grant

By Stephanie Tschida, Community Court Grant Manager

Seattle Community Court began as a pilot project that would give a limited number of low-risk quality-of-life offenders an opportunity to complete community service hours and make key social services linkages in lieu of jail sentences. Striving to help those who repeatedly committed crimes and used costly jail resources, the community court approach was designed to help offenders break their cycle of crime and address the underlying issues leading to their criminal behavior.

In the pilot phase, eligibility was limited to those who were booked into jail for eligible offenses that occurred in downtown Seattle. Partnering with the Metropolitan Improvement District and Street Outreach Services, defendants worked to keep downtown Seattle sidewalks clean and assembled hygiene kits for the homeless.

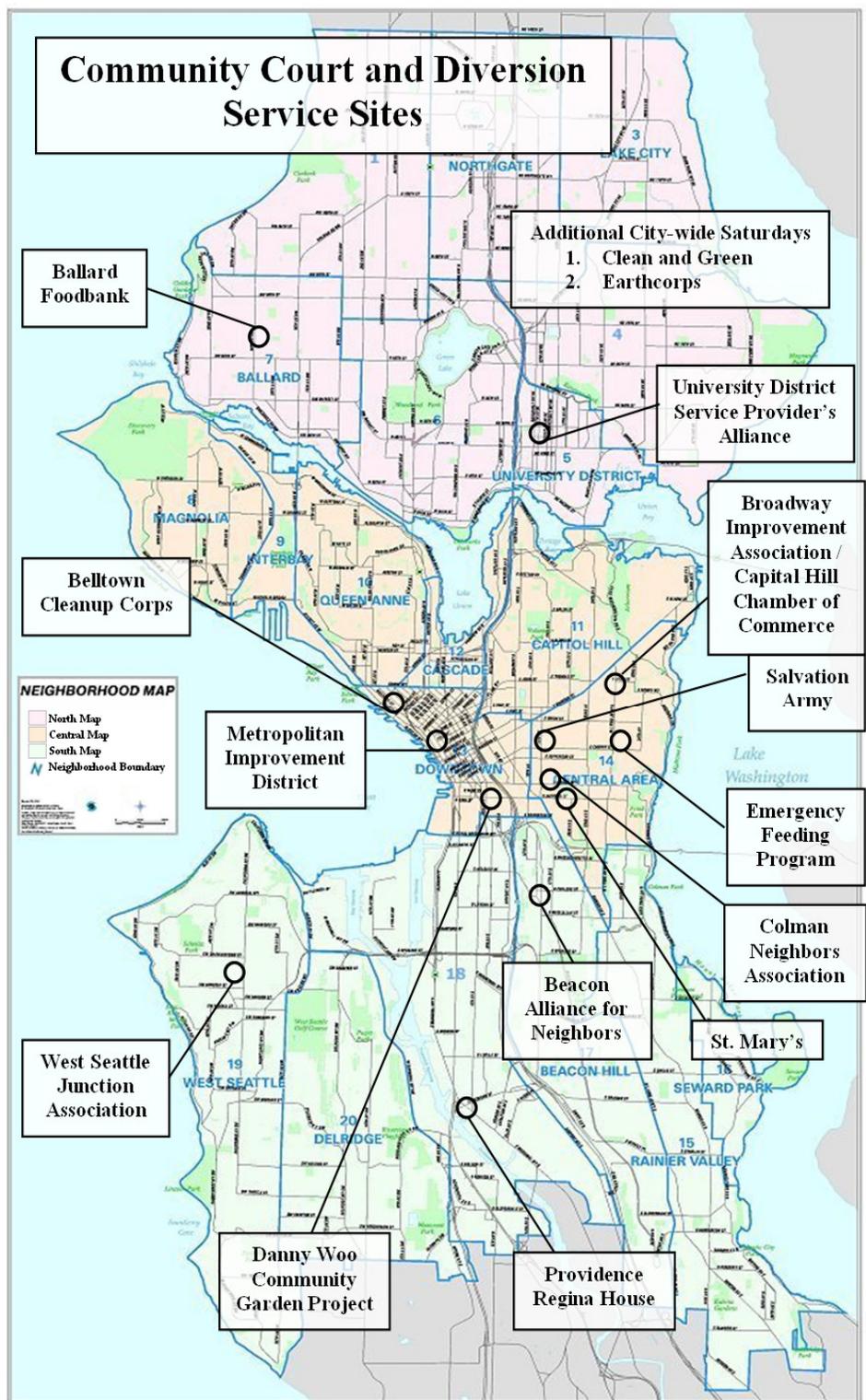
In 2006, Seattle was one of only ten jurisdictions nationwide to be awarded a 2-year, \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice as part of the *Community-Based Problem-Solving Criminal Justice Initiatives Grant Program*. Our grant initiative was designed to expand Seattle Community Court citywide for both booked and out-of-custody defendants and integrate the existing Pretrial Diversion Program into the program. This grant provided Seattle Community Court with the opportunity to serve more offenders, increase citywide community service options, increase the network of social service providers, and obtain evaluation assistance for the program.

I was hired in the Spring of 2006 by the City Attorney’s Office to help manage the grant initiative’s implementation. The first challenge was to significantly increase the number of community service sites available for community court and pretrial diversion defendants citywide. The Pretrial Diversion Program, which serves first-time offenders, had been operating at Seattle

Municipal Court since the 1970's. Previously, defendants were only required to pay \$75 and stay out of trouble for 90 days. Under the grant change, diversion candidates would be screened for social services just like regular community court defendants and would also need to complete eight hours of community service at approved sites. The first step was to use a Community Advisory Board meeting to get guidance from the community on the kinds of service activities to be performed and to get suggested locations for such service.

With that guidance in hand, I began by meeting with organizations around the city that were committed to improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods and would be willing to serve as potential sites for community service. Colman Neighborhood Association (CNA), serving the area between Martin Luther King and 23rd Avenue South, South Jackson and Judkins streets in the East Precinct, was one of our earliest new partnerships. Every first and third Saturday, neighbors set out on a "Litter Patrol" to clean up the sidewalks, plant trees, and create traffic circles. CNA agreed to partner with us by monitoring offenders for four hours to work in support of their litter patrol program. This was an ideal fit for our Pre-Trial Diversion defendants, who could complete their eight hours of service in two Saturday sessions.

Finding service sites for our regular community court defendants was a different challenge because they had more hours of service to complete. Frequently, they began their community service on weekdays immediately after their release from jail. They also required closer monitoring given their criminal histories. We also needed a service site that could handle some defendants who had physical challenges. Clearly, a different approach was necessary, so I approached the Emergency Feeding Program, an outstanding non-profit organization that assembles food packages for citywide feeding programs and food banks. They agreed to take and monitor some of our defendants from Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.



Finding the resources to help neighborhood organizations monitor defendant community service compliance was a continuous challenge. The perfect solution to this challenge was utilizing AmeriCorps -- a national service program for young adults 18 to 24 years old, who receive a stipend and an

educational award upon completion of 1700 hours of service to the community. With a goal to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier while strengthening communities, the AmeriCorps motto is to "get things done for America." With that sense of idealism and a commitment to making

positive change, utilizing AmeriCorps for Community Court was the perfect fit! We engaged two members at a minimal cost in the Fall of 2006, to help support a growing list of community service site monitors and work with defendants.

During this AmeriCorps year (September 2007 - August 2008), we had the benefit of working with four wonderful young people from the AmeriCorps program: My-Lan Dodd; Christopher Thomas; Andrew Sontag; and Schuyler Bagwell provided outstanding service to our program. As a result, we were able to partner with the Belltown Business Association and Community Council in our *Belltown Cleanup Corps* project. (See Spotlight, this page). Each Wednesday and Thursday, defendants help clean up Belltown side-by-side with our AmeriCorps team. In the true spirit of community collaboration, the Millionair Club generously donated use of their facility as a meeting place, service site, and space to store our equipment. They also feed our participants a hot lunch. Litter-removal equipment is provided through a partnership with the City of Seattle's Adopt-a-Street program.

As a result of these and other efforts, we were able to successfully implement the grant changes in late 2006 and early 2007 resulting in the statistics described later in this issue. Today, we have 12 community service sites across the city that support and monitor Community Court and Pre-Trial Diversion defendants. (See Community Service sites map on Page 3). Partnerships like these are helping to make Seattle neighborhoods safer and more livable.

Seattle Municipal Court Resource Center: a One-Stop Shop for Social Services

Tricia Lapitan, SMC Strategic Advisor

The Seattle Municipal Court (SMC) established the Court Resource Center in its new courthouse facility to centrally locate agencies that provide human services to the community. The purpose of the Center is to create a

Spotlight on Belltown Cleanup Corps

By Andrew Sontag & Joseph Prencipe

The Belltown Community Court Service Site has had tremendous success as a result of a partnership between the Millionair Club; a Belltown charity; the Belltown Business Association; the Belltown Community Council; and Seattle Community Court. Integrating the Millionair Club site in October 2007, provided Community Court participants with an indoor meeting hub, storage for litter pick-up equipment, social service referrals for defendants, and a hot lunch. When weather conditions inhibit outdoor work, the ample indoor space and supportive environment allows community court participants an opportunity to assemble hygiene kits and pass them out to the needy that come to the Millionair Club for a free lunch. The site is an excellent location for defendants to fulfill their community service in an effective, organized and safe environment.

From September 2007 to April 2008, 210 Seattle Community Court defendants performed their community service in the Belltown Cleanup Corps. During this period, defendants completed 2,371 hours of service and Community Court AmeriCorps Team members contributed over 900 such hours while monitoring defendant compliance and encouraging completion of service. This totals over 3,271 hours of service at only one of Seattle Community Court's thirteen service sites. This is not a coincidence - this site is extraordinary and presents an ideal model of how our community court partnerships work.



Photo by Andrew Sontag

'one-stop shop' to address the complex underlying problems of Court clientele and members of the community. A central premise of the Center is that the courthouse can serve as a gateway to treatment and related services for populations with multiple problems and limited access to services. While some defendants are mandated to participate in treatment - such as substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence treatment - the Court encourages all of the defendants to make use of the

Center's services when they are in need, whether they are coming to court to address legal issues or not.

The Court Resource Center is a vital component of Seattle Municipal Court's Community Involved Justice initiative. The Center facilitates immediate access to the social services mandated for our Community Court defendants, and often serves participants from the Day Reporting Program who voluntarily access onsite services. Many of these

Spotlight on Defendant Artwork

by Sonny Thomas

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 defendants who successfully complete the community court program. The idea behind the calendar project came from Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Tuere Sala, the Community Court Prosecutor, who recognized that most of the defendants that come through Community Court are often very disorganized and scattered, both emotionally and physically, often due to homelessness, mental health, and chemical dependency issues. The calendar is something they can use, something they contributed to, and is a small token of recognition we can give them for completing the community court program.

THE CITY OF SEATTLE
COMMUNITY COURT
2008 2009
CALENDAR



Calendar cover

february



2009

"I feel that Community Court is a great program. It is a real pleasure to know that you're making a difference in the community."

February calendar artwork

individuals have been marginalized for decades; they suffer from multiple addictions, mental illness, medical disabilities, and homelessness. The intensive engagement and relationship-building provided by Center staff is a key component to drawing these individuals back into mainstream society.

The Center currently houses satellite offices for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Sound Mental Health, and Children's Home Society of Washington. Due to the vision of the Court's human services partners, thousands of individuals who may not otherwise seek services are now receiving care. These services are provided by our partner agencies at no cost to the city. Additionally, the Center facilitates thousands of telephone and walk-in referrals to community-based organizations each year. The centralized location and ease of access to these services facilitates collaboration, increases accessibility, and helps to eliminate the barriers that so often prevent successful enrollment in necessary programs.

Since 2005, the Center has provided over 13,000 services¹. The Court Resource Center is staffed entirely by citizen volunteers and student interns who have contributed more than 25,000 volunteer hours of service since 2003. These dedicated staff members have helped defendants and others in our community to:

- Obtain emergency clothing, personal hygiene products, and snack food items;
- Navigate complex application processes for DSHS, Social Security Insurance (SSI) benefits and ADATSA² assessments;
- Complete court mandated social service linkages with onsite and community-based providers;

¹ This number represents multiple visits to the Center for some individuals who attend group activities.

² ADATSA: Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act – publicly funded treatment.

- Secure shelter housing immediately after court;
- Access housing programs for longer term placement;
- Access mental health and chemical dependency services;
- Obtain medical care; and
- Obtain resources for hot meals, food banks, employment, and job re-training.

The Court Resource Center offers free and low cost services including:

- DSHS Benefits enrollment;
- ADATSA Assessments;
- Relapse Prevention Classes;
- Men's and Women's Groups for Community Court and Day Reporting Program participants;
- Chemical Dependency Assessments;
- Mental Health Intakes;
- Domestic Violence Treatment;
- Alcohol/Drug Information School;
- Drop-In Child Care for families conducting business at the Seattle Municipal Court; and
- Linkages to community based services.

Seattle Community Court People Make it Work!

By My-Lan Dodd

At its heart, Seattle Community Court works because of the dedication of a great number of people. We would like to thank and recognize the following people for their efforts in making this program a success. From the Public Sector: Former Presiding Judge Fred Bonner; Presiding Judge Ron Mamiya; and the entire bench of the Seattle Municipal Court; City Attorney Tom Carr; Public & Community Safety Division Chief Robert Hood; Assistant City Attorney Tuere Sala; and BJA Grant Manager Stephanie Tschida; Former ACA Director Dave Chapman; ACA Supervising Attorney Karen Murray; ACA Attorney Nancy Waldman; SMC Court Administrator, Yolande Williams; Chief Clerk Bob White; Strategic Advisors Lorri Cox;

and Tricia Lapitan; Probation Officers Jason Pina, Othella Jones, and Robert Lee; and the court staff of Courtroom 1003.

From the Private Sector: Dave Dillman and Steven Walls, of the Metropolitan Improvement District (DSA); Mark Baerwaldt of the Belltown Community Council; Greg Schuler of the Belltown Business Association; Grace Reamer of the Colman Neighbors Association; Penny Buffo of the Salvation Army; Sam Osbourne and Arthur Lee of the Emergency Feeding Program; Craig Thompson of the Beacon Alliance of Neighbors; Megan Gibbard of the University District Service Providers Alliance; Paige Collins of the Providence Regina House; Paul Dvoskin of Broadway Improvement Association; David Montoure of the West Seattle Junction Association; and Tom Chatriand of Farestart.

These leaders in our community have worked tirelessly to keep Seattle streets clean, to improve our neighborhoods, to feed the hungry, to help those in need, and to foster increased civic engagement of diverse populations citywide. Our community partners have opened their doors to citizens involved in the criminal justice system, and helped restore these individuals back into the community in the most positive of ways.

We would also like to thank and recognize Mayor Greg Nickels, the members of the Seattle City Council, and Bureau of Justice Assistance Director Domingo Herraiz, for their financial assistance of this program.

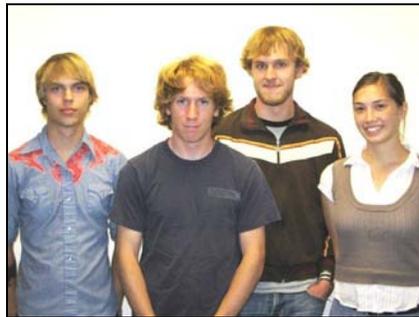
And last but not least, we would like to thank the many volunteers who have committed hundreds of hours of their time to help this court to function effectively including volunteers of Seattle Municipal Court's Resource Center, the Community Court AmeriCorps Team, the Seattle City Attorney's Office, and interns, externs, and graduate students from Seattle University and the University of Washington.

Additionally, volunteers support many activities without which the Seattle Community Court could not function. Their daily activities range from doing needs assessments of defendants; to helping them make social services connections; to assisting the Community Court's prosecutor and court monitor; to monitoring community service sites throughout the city, from collecting program data to developing special projects. Utilizing the talents and enthusiasm of student volunteers and the AmeriCorps Team has helped to bolster the Seattle Community Court Program in its effort to support healthy communities and to reintegrate defendants into those communities.

Seattle Community Court Salutes the 2007-2008 AmeriCorps Team

By Stephanie Tschida

Nearly every day in Seattle Municipal Court there is a graduation ceremony for a defendant who has successfully completed the requirements of the community court program. But another kind of graduation ceremony occurred for four young people who have made an indelible mark on this court over the last year. My-Lan Dodd, Christopher Thomas, Andrew Sontag and Schuyler Bagwell are about to complete their year as AmeriCorps volunteers in the Seattle Community Court effort.



AmeriCorps members Christopher (Sonny) Thomas, Andrew Sontag, Schuyler Bagwell, and My-Lan Dodd

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National & Community

Service, an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through community service and volunteering.

Joined by volunteer extraordinaire Joseph Prencipe, this team has itself performed thousands of hours of community service while monitoring defendant compliance and encouraging defendant program completion. They have helped hundreds of defendants to complete their social services mandates and even obtain other help beyond what the court's program requires. As the Seattle Community Court continued to expand, they helped to identify new social services referral sites and develop new community service site partnerships. When they realized that defendants who had been in-custody prior to their plea were in need of clothing, they helped organize a highly successful clothing drive in partnership with Seattle University.

They also played a huge role in the design and drafting of this newsletter and played a critical role in designing content of the soon to be launched Seattle Community Court website. Finally, they spent countless hours in the mundane but important task of tracking defendant criminal history information and entering Community Court data, assisting us in the process of reporting to the Bureau of Justice Assistance on our grant progress. True to the last, they helped to interview next year's AmeriCorps candidates and carefully documented their current and past activities so that the new volunteers will have a procedures roadmap to help them grow and sustain the program for years to come.

As Judge Mamiya recently observed at the Citizen Advisory Board Meeting this spring, "if these young people are in any way representative of the next generation of leaders, we are indeed in very good hands." In the end, we can only hope that they got as much from us out of the experience as they gave. We wish them the best of luck.

Spotlight on "In their own words"

Defendants comment on their community service and community court experience upon successful program completion:

It just made me realize there's people out here that are worse off than I am. I need to get myself together so I don't need to be the one that gets helped.

Brandi B.

The court ain't out to get you; it's out to help you.... I always had a stereotype, well you know the bad guys blah, blah, blah. You guys really opened a lot of doors for me; I got a job, I got a place to live, bam, bam, bam. I'm still clean and sober to this day – it's like 23 days, it's amazing, spooky.

Thomas K.

I'm intending to go up there [the community service site] probably twice a week on my own. I want to thank the dream team of this extraordinary court program and legal counsel and staff. They have really extended themselves and encouraged me to engage in positive contacts.

Calvin T

I want to thank you for the way you operate your court. I came here with the intentions of getting five days and burning you. It's a guaranteed five days [if you fail] when you come here, they were recommending 30 days across the street. But it was the dignity you dealt with me and the other people in the courtroom that convinced me that maybe I didn't want to burn a bridge that somebody else might need down the road.

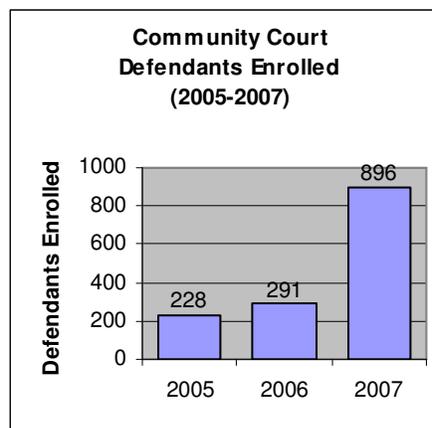
So, thank you.

Dwayne M.

By the Numbers: Seattle Community Court Stats

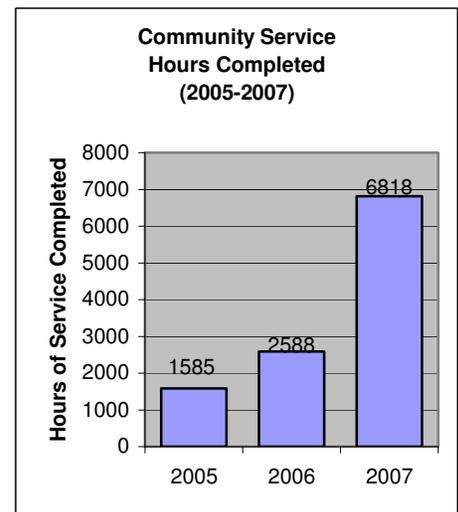
By Bob Hood

Although the true benefits from Seattle Community Court can probably be best appreciated by attending a defendant "graduation" ceremony celebrating successfully completing Community Court conditions or by joining a community service team that is cleaning up a neighborhood affected by low level crime, the magnitude of the raw numbers going through Community Court also provides a telling story of Seattle Community Court's expansion over the last eighteen months.



During the first nine months of the Court's pilot operation in 2005, nearly 230 community court defendants completed nearly 1,600 community service hours. They also successfully completed 371 social services linkages. During the first full year of operation as a pilot in 2006, the court saw nearly 300 defendants complete almost 2,600 hours of service and successfully make about 432 social services contacts.

The effects of the grant expansion, starting in early 2007, were to dramatically increase these measures. By the end of 2007, the Seattle Community Court saw nearly 900 defendants complete just over 6,800 hours of community service and make nearly 1,050 social services contacts. As a result of the implementation of Seattle Community Court's diversion changes last year, an additional 630 defendants completed about another 5,000 hours of community service in 2007.



Combined, the Community Court effort generated in excess of 11,800 hours of service in 2007 alone. We have seen these numbers rise in 2008, as we see the full year effect of the court's expansion and compliance improvements made possible by AmeriCorps team efforts at sites such as the Belltown Cleanup Corp. As a result of these changes the Seattle Community Court is now positioned to support nearly 1,800 defendants per year as they perform in excess of 18,000 hours of service to the community. Short-term recidivism while participating in the court's program is relatively low at about 30%. We should be able to report on 1st and 2nd Quarter 2008 data shortly.

"Volunteers from the Community Court Program have proven to be a highly valuable asset for the Emergency Feeding Program. Without them packing bags of groceries and sorting food donations in our warehouse five days a week, our tiny staff of four would never get around to actually doing our jobs. Many participants in the program have returned to volunteer even after their mandated hours are fulfilled, because both they and we have found working together to help others in our community to be a worthwhile, rewarding, and fun experience. This partnership continues to be a deeply positive one for all involved."

Sam Osborne, Development Director, Emergency Feeding Program

Coming Attractions for Seattle Community Court

By Bob Hood

The coming months should be an interesting and busy time for Seattle's Community Court, as a number of special projects are coming to fruition. We look forward to reporting on them to you in the next edition or before. The following are just a few examples of these developments.

First, final preparations are being made for the launch of the Seattle Community Court website. We anticipate a launch within four to six weeks. An email alert will advise our readers of its availability and accessibility.

Second, work is continuing on the long-term recidivism data for Community Court defendants. By the next edition we should also be able to report on some of that data, which is of great interest to us all.

Third, work is also continuing on an electronic survey that will gauge reader awareness of and opinions about the Seattle Community Court program and the community service that is being performed in around Seattle. Electronic access to the survey links will be distributed by email to our readers and through our neighborhood organization partners. Please take a couple minutes to fill it out and let us know what you think!

Finally, a team from Seattle's Community Court will travel to Vancouver, B.C. next month, to witness the inauguration of their community court. While in their planning stages, teams from Vancouver made multiple trips to Seattle to examine our court's operations. Just like the Portland Community mentored us, we were more than happy to provide similar help to them. We look forward to them joining the "community court family."



Seattle Community Court participants working alongside Beacon Alliance for Neighbors to restore an urban green space.

Upcoming Events

8/02/08, 08/16/08

9am-1pm, 803 24th Avenue South
Colman Neighbors Association

Litter Patrol and other revitalization activities in the Colman community

8/09/08

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

Continuing neighborhood restoration project on Beacon Hill.

8/15/08

9am-1pm, 4210 SW Oregon St.
West Seattle Junction Assoc.

Ongoing neighborhood improvement project in West Seattle.

Ongoing

9:15am - 4pm 620 S Main St.
Danny Woo Garden
Seattle, WA 98104

Community Garden/Pea Patch preparation and maintenance

9:15am - 4pm 2515 Western Avenue
Belltown Clean-up Project
Seattle, WA 98104

Community clean-up in the Belltown neighborhood