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Fall 2009 Edition

Highlights In this Issue

- 1** Study Finds Community Court Reduces Defendant Rate of Reoffending by 66%!
- 2** Lake City Dedicates New Public Art Mural

Seattle Community Court Website Goes live on the Web
- 3** Meet the New AmeriCorps Team
- 4** Meet the Seattle Community Court Executive Committee
- 5** Meet the Seattle Community Court Steering Committee

Focus On: Dallas Community Court
- 6** New Community Service Site for the University District

Editor's Farewell
- 7** Lake City Celebration Photos
- 8** Anatomy of a Public Art Mural



*Belltown Community Service Site
Photo by Andy Sontag*

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Seattle Community Court News

Study Finds Community Court Reduces Defendant Rate of Reoffending by 66%!

By Bob Hood

A recently completely outcome evaluation by the Justice Management Institute of Denver, Colorado, has concluded that Seattle Community Court defendants experienced a 60% reduction in the frequency of their criminal reoffending in the 18 months following their community court intervention.

The study was made possible because of funding made available through the Community Based Problem Solving Criminal Justice Initiatives grant that the City of Seattle was awarded back in 2006. The study examined the criminal histories of 209 defendants who entered Community Court between July Of 2005 and June of 2006 and compared them with a control group of 230 defendants who were offered Community Court during the same time period but rejected it. 80% of both groups committed at least new offense in the 18 month period following their entry into or their rejection of Community Court.

But when the rate of reoffending was examined, it was clear that "offenders in community court re-offend at a significantly lower rate than offenders who proceed through the traditional court process." said JMI's Vice President Elaine Nugent- Borkorave, the study's principle researcher. Community Court defendants dropped from an average of 5 cases within eighteen months prior to being in community court to only two cases after, while the control group actually showed an from two cases before to 3 cases after.

"This finding in and of itself represents a potential tremendous cost-saving to the city of Seattle. Given that most of the offenders are held in jail at the time of their arrest, fewer arrests among the community court participants translates into a decrease in scarce and expensive jail bed usage." says Nugent-Bokorave.

The Court's Executive Committee hailed the study's findings in a joint press release issued on October 29th. "We had an intuitive sense seeing these defendants going through our court day in and day out that we were making a difference in their lives. This study confirms that belief and establishes that we are making a significant and measurable difference." said Judge Fred Bonner.

Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr was equally impressed. "We already knew that the Court was expediting case resolutions, saving jail costs, making communities whole through community service, and helping defendants get needed services. This latest finding establishes that the program is also reducing defendant recidivism in significant ways." he said.

ACA Don Madsen was also pleased with the study's findings. "This study demonstrates that by providing access to services and providing meaningful alternatives to incarceration, we can help individuals change their lives for the better." he said.

A number of entities including the King County Regional Law, Safety, & Justice Committee have been briefed on the findings and the report has been forwarded to City Council's Public Safety Committee. The report is posted at: seattle.gov/communitycourt/.

Lake City Celebrates Mural Produced by Defendant Community Service

By Stephanie Tschida

On Friday, September 25th the Lake City neighborhood celebrated the completion of a public art mural designed and produced by Seattle Community Court defendants doing court-ordered community service. Over fifty people attended the ceremony dedicating the completed mural which is located on a wall of the Lake City Community Center and faces Albert Davis Park, at 12526 27th Ave NE Seattle. Seattle Community Court Judge Fred Bonner, Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr, Public & Community Safety Div. Chief Bob Hood, Lake City Community activist Chuck Dickey, Community Court graduate Chris S, and I had an opportunity to address the gathering.

The building-sized mural, based on thematic elements about Lake City history gathered from local residents, was designed and completed by over thirty offenders contributing community service time on the project from August 18th to September 24th. Their efforts were supported by the Seattle City Attorney's Office AmeriCorps Team, the Seattle Community Court probation staff, the Seattle Parks Department, the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, the Lake City Taskforce, the Lake City Community Center, and the Lake City Lion's Club. Paint and materials were donated by West Coast Paint Supply.

The project was identified by the community as a desired community service project and spearheaded by Lake City Chamber & Lion's Club member Chuck Dickie. Interestingly, when the Center for Court Innovation's Brett Taylor and Julius Lang visited in August, Public & Community Safety Division Chief Bob Hood brought them out to the Lake City site and they all got a chance to see the project just as it was getting underway. On that day we had an opportunity to watch as a community service crew discussed and sketched out some of the elements that were included in the eventual final design.



Lake City Public Art Mural

All of us were particularly impressed with the creativity and enthusiasm that the service crew members brought to the project. The work was a great example of how an innovative, problem-solving court can actually do some societal good from what started as just another minor criminal offense. Follow up crews finished the design in the following weeks and Charles Ng of the Parks Department helped secure speedy approval of the design from the Department. A final service crew painted the actual design in short order, completing it just in time for the dedication.

The mural is just one of over 20 different community service partnership sites located around the City of Seattle where Seattle Community Court offenders have provided community service as part of their criminal sentences. This unique court program allows low-risk, misdemeanor offenders an opportunity to obtain social services help and complete community service design to "pay back" the community for their offenses. The program has generated over 30,000 hours of community service in the last four years. The program also helps to reduce reliance on expensive jail, holds defendants accountable,

For more pictures of the celebration, see pages 7- 8. For a pictorial description of the project, see "Anatomy of a Public Art Mural" on page 9.

[Editor's Note: We cannot let this occasion pass without recognizing the outstanding work that **Stephanie Tschida** did in organizing and completing this project. Prior to working at the City Attorney's Office in her current role, Stephanie used an art program to work with troubled youth in the juvenile justice system. A gifted artist herself, she was a great team leader for this project and helped spur every phase of it including teaching the service crews how to take a relatively small design on paper and blow it up to a full, building-sized mural, helping to coach them on the detailed work, and lending a hand herself. This project could not have been completed without her.]

Seattle Community Court Website Goes Live on the Worldwide Web

By Bob Hood

Following a lengthy planning and design process, the Seattle Community Court website went live on the worldwide web on Friday, December 18th. The site features pages that describe the Seattle Community Court program including facts and statistics, its history and major milestones, information for defendants and the community, news accounts about the court, links to the Court's electronic newsletter *Court News*, links to other



Seattle Community Court website

AmeriCorps team members and a gifted web designer, did extraordinary work physically designing the page and inserting textual content. Janice also provided him with important assistance and was instrumental in loading the page into the City’s web network and actually connecting it to the worldwide web. The project could not have been brought to fruition without them.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO VISIT
<http://seattle.gov/communitycourt/>

Meet the New 2009-2010 AmeriCorps Team

By Stephanie Tschida

With the coming of Fall comes the need to introduce the new members of our AmeriCorps Team. Our regular fulltime AmeriCorps Team members commit 1700 hours of service to the Seattle Community Court Program between September and July of the following year. We are once again fortunate to have assembled another great team with the help of *Just Serve*, our local AmeriCorps partners. This year’s team includes:

Domonique Meeks, who grew up in Kent, Washington where he graduated from Kentlake High School. He then attended Central Washington University in Ellensburg where he participated in many organizations such as the Black Student Union, Filipino American Student Association, Back-2-Basics: CWU Hip Hop Club and many others. While at Central, since his freshman year he was also a student program coordinator for the Diversity Education Center where he assisted in bringing influential speakers to CWU such as Cornell West, Wangari Maathai, and Dolores Huerta. Domonique one day plans to go back to either graduate or law school in the near future with hopes of becoming an attorney. Domonique joined AmeriCorps to gain knowledge and experience about what is going on in his community, to better make change, and create opportunities and resources for individuals in the future.

community court and restorative justice websites of interest, and information for other jurisdictions seeking mentorship help in designing or improving their own community court programs. The new website can be directly accessed at: <http://seattle.gov/communitycourt/>; or via a link at the City Attorney’s Office webpage accessible at:

<http://www.seattle.gov/law/>. It will also be accessible from the websites of Seattle Municipal Court and Associated Counsel for the Accused shortly.

Seattle Community Court is one of only a handful of community court sites that maintains an active website. Its design was clearly a collaborative effort that sought to capture the unique aspects of the Seattle initiative while using examples from other jurisdictions to hone content, improve readability, and maximize value to the reader. We “borrowed” some content and took some inspiration from our colleagues at the Center for Court Innovation and Hartford Community Court and would like to thank them for leading the way. Sometimes it is easier to walk in the footsteps of others than to try to start something new from scratch.

We were particularly pleased with the pages describing our program, our community partnerships, and program information for defendants. We hope to improve the content in years to come and would welcome any comments or suggestions that would make this a better site. Please email suggestions to: communitycourt@seattle.gov.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize a number of people who contributed to the successful posting of this website. Thank you to Seattle Community Court Executive Committee members Judge Fred Bonner, City Attorney Tom Carr, and ACA Director Don Madsen, for their support of and contributions to this project. Thanks also to Tricia Lapitan, who helped us with program statistical data contained on the site and to all of our AmeriCorps Team members, past and present, who helped with photos and content. Last but not least, a special thanks goes out to, Stephanie Tschida, Stan Kehl and to Janice Gregg of the Law Department’s IT Staff. Stephanie worked tirelessly with me on text editing, content, and photos for the completed page. Stan, one of our



Dominique Meeks and Elana Jimenez (seated); Team Supervisor Stephanie Tschida, Anthony Mitchell, and Stan Kehl (standing).

Elana Jimenez, who is a South Seattle native and graduate from the University of Washington earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in American Ethnic Studies and Sociology. In her quest to explore the world around her and venture away from her hometown, she made the decision to travel with a purpose volunteering in a township in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and most recently completing a year of service in Los Angeles with another AmeriCorps program called City Year. Elana’s passion for community building and organizing while also working alongside those in her community who could benefit from an encouraging program like Community Court, greatly influenced her decision to join the team.

Anthony Mitchell, who was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA where he attended the Community Academy of Philadelphia and graduated in 1999. Anthony has been involved in community outreach work since the age 15. Anthony also attended Claflin University in Orangeburg, SC where he majored in Religion & Philosophy. His passion and purpose is working to help people make great transitions in their lives and set goals that will positively impact their lives.

Stan Kehl is a Seattle native and a graduate of Issaquah High School. He is also a graduate of the University of Washington with a BSChE and JD, and a relatively recent graduate of Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry with a Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality. He practiced law in Minneapolis as Legislative Liaison for the City of Minneapolis and

as a Bond Counsel working primarily with housing and redevelopment projects. He is in transition from his previous vocation as founder of KFH Publications, Inc. and publisher of *Puget Sound ComputerUser*, to his next endeavor. His AmeriCorps’ service with Community Court is a continuation of community service activity which has included work with Washington Information Network 2-1-1, the Religious Coalition for Equality, Overlake Hospital and Medical Center Pastoral Care Office, and Companis Association.

With talented help like this, we look forward to another great year with AmeriCorps.

Meet the Seattle Community Court Executive Committee

By Bob Hood

In previous issues of the Seattle Community Court News we highlighted the Community Court Charter which describes the roles and responsibilities of the governance structure of Seattle Community Court. Today we examine the roles and membership of the Community Court Executive Committee and its Current Members.



Seattle Community Court Executive Committee Members (l. to r.) ACA Director Don Madsen, Judge Fred Bonner, and City Attorney Tom Carr.

Under Community Court Charter, the Executive Committee constitutes the principal policy making body for the Community Court. Membership on the Executive Committee includes the Seattle Municipal Court Judge designated as the primary judge presiding in the Community Court, the

Seattle City Attorney, and the Director of Associated Counsel for the Accused, the principal agency providing public defense services in the Community Court. The Executive Committee’s responsibilities include resolving the principal policy issues and operational problems facing the Community Court, advocating for or providing sufficient budgetary and personnel resources for the court to meet its mission, and approving day-to-day operations and management recommendations made by the Community Court Steering Committee.

The Executive Committee currently consists of Judge Fred Bonner, Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr, and ACA Director Don Madsen. Judge Fred Bonner was first elected to Seattle Municipal Court in 1988. A graduate of the University of Washington Law School, he previously served as both a Magistrate and Commissioner for the Court and as a lawyer with the National Labor Relations Board in Seattle. He is was one of the founding members of Seattle Community and presided over the court from March of 2005 to the end of 2006. He recently retook the reigns as the judge presiding over the court in June of this year.

City Attorney Tom Carr was first elected as the Seattle City Attorney in 2001 and is one of the founding members of Seattle Community Court. Prior to serving in that role, he was in private practice and served as an Assistant United States Attorney in New York. His Office’s Precinct Liaison Program was also the 2008 winner of the National District Attorney’s Association Iceberg Award for outstanding contributions to the field of Community Prosecution.

Director Don Madsen has led the Associated Counsel for the Accused (ACA) since May of 2008 and has more than thirty years of experience with the agency as a public defender. He began working at ACA as a Rule 9 intern two weeks after graduating from law school in June of 1979, and was hired as a regular attorney after passing the bar examination that summer. He

represented misdemeanor offenders in District Court in his agency's Burien office and for approximately a year in Seattle Municipal Court. He then transferred to the felony unit and handled a felony caseload until 1987.

From 1987 to 2008, he supervised ACA's felony units, first in Seattle, and then in Kent. He became director of the agency upon the departure of Dave Chapman, who was one of the original founders of Community Court.

Come January, newly elected City Attorney Pete Holmes will replace Tom Carr as a member of the Court's Executive Committee.

Meet the Seattle Community Court Steering Committee

By Bob Hood

Under the Charter, the Steering Committee is responsible for the day to day operations of the Seattle Community Court. Its specific responsibilities include identifying and making recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding policy questions facing the court, problem solving operational issues facing the court, implementing Executive Committee decisions; and staffing meetings of the Community Advisory Board.



The Seattle Community Court Steering Committee tackles issues during a recent regular monthly meeting.

This committee is also be responsible for maintaining the Community Court's website which describes the purposes, outcomes, and activities of the court; publishing a quarterly, electronic, community court newsletter for

distribution to the Community Advisory Board and the broader public; and assessing and making recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding the budget, personnel, and resources needed to operate the court effectively.



The Steering Committee includes the three members of the Executive Committee and a broad range of representatives from the Seattle Court, Seattle City Attorney's Office, Associated Counsel for the Accused, and the Seattle Police Department.



Focus on: Dallas Community Court

By Bob Hood

In this issue of "Focus On" we examine the third member of the United States Department of Justice's Community Court Mentor network, the Dallas Community Court.

Dallas opened its South Dallas Community Court, the 24th in the nation, in October of 2004. Unlike "centralized" community courts such as in Hartford and Seattle, Dallas adopted a "decentralized" model much like the

original community courts in Portland, Oregon, where the court is placed directly out into a targeted problem neighborhood. The South Dallas Community Court serves the high-poverty neighborhoods of South Dallas and Fair Park and is housed in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center, where numerous social services providers were already providing services and could assist the community court effort. Partnering with the community center allowed Dallas program to start a community court on a modest budget and after an accelerated one year planning effort.

Persons arrested for 'quality of life', Class C misdemeanor crimes within the court's geographical catchment area are arraigned in Community Court and if they plead guilty or no contest can be ordered to do community service in the neighborhood and attend rehabilitative or educational programs instead of pay fines. Examples of Class C misdemeanors include sleeping in public, pedestrian and alcohol violations, manifestation of prostitution, possession of drug paraphernalia, illegal dumping, code violations, and similar "quality of life" crimes which are punishable by fines.

"The Community Court is unique because offenders are held accountable to the members of the community," says Former City Attorney Madeleine Johnson. "The Community Court gets the community involved in the criminal justice system, restores the community where the crime is committed, and also seeks to rehabilitate individuals to prevent them from committing criminal acts again."

Dallas Community Courts Manager Dianne Gibson says that community court offers offenders a chance to make restitution to the neighborhoods they have victimized and lowers the chances for recidivism. "Those sentenced in community courts not only have the opportunity to participate in free drug and alcohol treatment programs, and job training and placement assistance, but they can also receive food and transportation vouchers," Gibson says.

Since opening its doors in 2004, the South Dallas Community Court has created many creative partnerships, including a new reentry docket to tackle the challenges faced by individuals returning to the community from jail, a community service program for truant youth, and collaborations with law enforcement agencies, faith-based organizations and social service and health care providers to work with prostitutes and combat active drug markets. It has also partnered with local churches and community organizations to help identify community service projects, answer community questions and concerns, and offer tours of the court.



Former Dallas City Attorney Madeleine Johnson makes opening remarks at 1st Community Court Dedication Ceremony

In November 18, 2008, following the successful implementation of its first community court, Dallas opened a second community court in West Dallas which is housed in the West Dallas Multipurpose Center. Both of the courts operate morning and afternoon sessions one day per week. Dallas plans to open a third community court in the Oak Cliffs area of Dallas later this spring.

During the 2008-2009 fiscal year, 1,332 cases were processed through the South Dallas Community Court and 700 cases were processed through the West Dallas Community Court. Both of the courts are managed by the Community Advocacy Division of the Dallas City Attorney's Office.

If you are ever in Dallas, its community courts are a great place to visit and see how yet another city has adapted the community court model to address its local needs. For more information on

the Dallas Community Courts, you can call 214-671-0211 or visit their website at: <http://www.dallascityattorney.com>.

Greater University Chamber of Commerce Provides Newest Community Service Site

By Stephanie Tschida

A key goal of our Community Court partnerships is to find new opportunities for defendants to provide meaningful community service to neighborhoods impacted by crime and disorder. Many communities and organizations from around Seattle have stepped up to offer such opportunities.

One of our newest partnerships is with the Greater University Chamber of Commerce. Located three miles from downtown in Seattle's North Precinct, the Chamber serves an area from Ravenna to Portage Bay and from I-5 to Lake Washington. Its mission is to "enhance a healthy business environment in harmony with our unique university & residential communities." The Chamber promotes the area as "one of the oldest, most loved and diverse communities" in Seattle, one that provides "residents and visitors with a kaleidoscope of continental shopping and dining opportunities unparalleled anywhere in Greater Seattle."

Now twice a week, pretrial diversion candidates monitored through the Community Court Program meet Shewit Gebreberhan, the Chamber's Volunteer Services Coordinator, and set out to spruce up the University District neighborhood. They help with much needed litter removal, graffiti paint-outs and other restorative activities. Many of the participants, who actually live close to the area, have told us they really enjoyed making a difference in their own community. In the future, with help from our AmeriCorps Community Court Team, we plan on bringing even larger service crews out to the site to help the Chamber with the many special

public events they host throughout the year. You can learn more about the Greater University Chamber of Commerce by visiting their website located at:

<http://www.udistrictchamber.org/>.

in Seattle where we have community service partner sites. As defendants put in meaningful hours of community service restoring these neighborhoods, we hope that their eyes will be opened to the impact of their offenses and some of the many social services offered in the city and how the city is prepared to help them get back on track.

The Seattle Community Court AmeriCorps Team continues to reach out to new sites and is in talks with several other new locations. If you are aware of any other opportunities for such partnerships, please call 684-7778.

Seattle Community Court News Editor Bids Farewell

By Bob Hood

With my departure from the Seattle City Attorney's Office, Seattle Community Court News will be getting a new editor soon. It's been my pleasure to help bring to you, our readers, the story of this remarkable Court. My involvement with the Seattle Community Court program has been without a doubt one of the highlights of my career with the City Attorney's Office.

I want to take one last opportunity to thank all of those who have helped to make this newsletter a success. You have been a great team to work with. Rest assured that under the capable leadership of Judge Fred Bonner and ACA Director Don Madsen, bigger and better things lie ahead both for this newsletter and this Court.

To our many friends across the Community Court family, if I can be of any future assistance, feel free to contact me at robertwhood@gmail.com.

And to paraphrase my old idol, Edward R. Murrow, good bye and good luck.

More Pictures from the Lake City Mural Dedication



Lake City's Chuck Dickey addresses Dedication Attendees.



Lake City's Chuck Dickey Presents Stephanie Tschida, the Seattle City Attorney's Office Community Service Manager, with a Certificate of Thanks for the Mural.



No Celebration is complete without a cake!



City Attorney Tom Carr addresses the crowd.



Lake City residents enjoy mural dedication ceremony.



Community Court defendant Chris S. traveled 1 & 1/2 hours by bus to join the celebration and address the crowd.



Mural detail



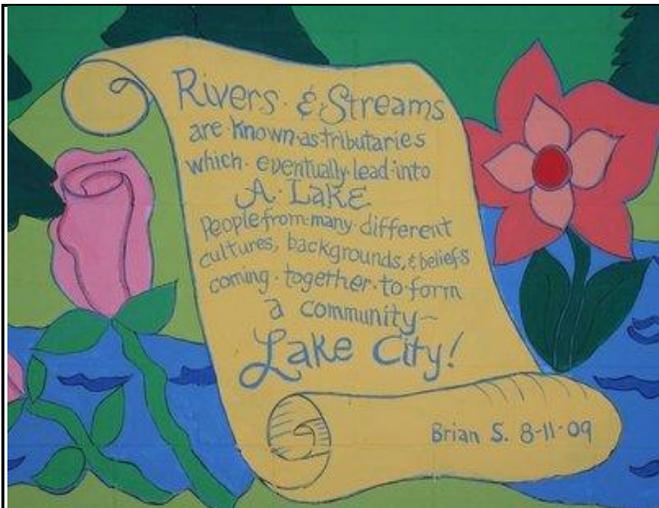
Guests hear from more speakers



Judge Fred Bonner addresses the crowd



View of mural from Albert Davis Park



Another mural detail

ANATOMY OF A PUBLIC ART MURAL



The project gets underway.



The basic background is applied.



Artistic elements begin to be introduced.



More elements are added.



Detailed thematic elements are added.



Community Court defendants admire the completed mural.

Seattle Community Court
 June 2, 2009
 Community Service Sites

