



## Seattle City Attorney

Peter S. Holmes

### **News Release**

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### **Seattle Community Court Earns National Recognition as Mentor Court**

Seattle Municipal Community Court, celebrating its five-year anniversary this month, was recently named as one of three Mentor Courts in the country by the U.S. Department of Justice.

As a mentor, Seattle's Community Court program will be a role model for other cities looking for effective ways to address chronic public system users – those defendants who repeatedly commit low-level misdemeanor crimes related to their homelessness, unemployment, alcohol or drug use, and cycle endlessly through the courts and jail.

"Seattle has been given a great honor in being selected as a mentor court after only five years," said Tuere Sala, Community Court prosecutor. "The recognition is a testament to what is possible when prosecution, defense and the court work together in the pursuit of justice."

Instead of more jail time, defendants who participate in Community Court work off their sentences. Defendants are sentenced to two, four, or six days of community service instead of up to a year in jail that they would face as repeat offenders.

Community Court participants are also assessed for social service needs and are required to contact the appropriate agencies in an effort to address the underlying issues leading to their crimes.

Great partnerships throughout the community are a key ingredient in the program's success.

"This is truly a win-win partnership for all. It models the spirit of cooperation that is critically important in creating a sense of belonging for everyone connected to the Community Courts program, said Jim Miller, executive director of The Millionair Club Charity.

The Community Court program started small in March 2005, mainly handling defendants from downtown and Pioneer Square. The first year, 228 defendants opted into Community Court. Last year, 1,024 defendants voluntarily participated.

A total of 31,435 hours of community service have been completed in five years, including 12,150 hours last year alone.

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