

the newsletter of the

Pennsylvania  
Juvenile Court  
Judges'  
Commission

# P E N N S Y L V A N I A J U V E N I L E J U S T I C E

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Edward G. Rendell, Governor

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May 2007

## Governor Rendell Proclaims Juvenile Justice Week September 30 – October 6, 2007

Governor Edward G. Rendell recently proclaimed the week of September 30 – October 6, 2007 as “Juvenile Justice Week” in Pennsylvania. Juvenile probation departments across the commonwealth are encouraged to use “Juvenile Justice Week” as an opportunity to engage the public about the mission and outcomes of Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system.

The [proclamation](#) notes that Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system is charged with providing programs of supervision, care, and rehabilitation, as well as providing balanced attention to the protection of our communities, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed by juveniles, and the development of competencies to enable children within the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system to become responsible and productive members of their communities.

Chief juvenile probation officers are encouraged to send examples of media accounts of local Juvenile Justice Week activities to [Greg Young](#), for publication in future editions of *Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice*.



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## The Talents of Our Youths Recognized

**O**n April 10, 2007, seven youths from the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department enrolled in the Baum School of Art, were recognized for their accomplishments. Juvenile probation officers Shannon Semmel and Tracie Davies arranged the recognition program. Chief Probation Officer Paul Werrell and Ann Lalik, executive director of the Baum School of Art, welcomed the students and guests. Ms. Lalik indicated that over the past few years the Baum School has been partnering with the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department, she has observed exemplary behavior of the teens who attend the class and the sense of self worth that they seem to gain from their accomplishments. She also noted the Baum School provides an emotionally safe place for the youth to learn and grow; to express themselves in a supportive environment and to learn technical skills.

The Baum school instructor, Jenny Nathan Gidley, has taught this program for the entire school year and, according to Ms. Gidley, the work represented at this recognition event reflected the hard work of talented and dedicated young people. The students were willing to try new mediums and techniques and were not afraid to challenge themselves. She appreciated their positive attitudes and indicated that she was glad to know them all.

Juvenile Court Administrative Judge Robert Steinberg also spoke at the program and related that art is an expression of who you are, what you see, and what you believe. He congratulated the youths for their efforts in this program. In addition, he presented each youth with a certificate of recognition and he presented a special award for the most outstanding piece of artwork, which he will have framed and placed outside his courtroom.

This publication is produced monthly at the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research at Shippensburg University.

Guest articles, especially those with photographs, are always welcome; please submit them by email.

Greg Young is the editor. Our address is CJJT&R, Shippensburg University, 1871 Old Main Drive, Shippensburg, PA 17257-2299. [gyoung@state.pa.us](mailto:gyoung@state.pa.us)

## Addiction Counseling/Competencies Updated

**T**he Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently updated and re-issued a guide that outlines professional standards for substance treatment counselors and competencies associated with positive treatment outcomes. As a national best practices guide, Technical Assistance Publication 21 (TAP 21), *Addiction Counseling Competencies: The Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Professional Practice*, is the update to the 1998 edition.

TAP 21 identifies 123 competencies essential to the effective practice of counseling for psychoactive substance use disorders. The publication also presents the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) counselors need to become proficient in each competency. Information on an appropriate scope of practice for the field is also included.

The updated TAP 21 reflects SAMHSA's commitment to workforce development, which is one of the agency's priority areas. The previous edition of this publication was instrumental in evaluating addiction counseling curricula, advising students, and assessing counseling proficiencies.

Almost a decade ago, the National Curriculum Committee conducted focus groups and a national survey to obtain feedback from the field about the original publication's impact. The process of revision began in 2000 and ended in 2005, with the committee examining how best to package and present the publication to help people learn key elements and adopt new strategies.

Tap21 contains feedback-based improvements from addiction practice and education professionals as well as references to literature published between 2000 and 2005. But the overarching competencies remain largely unchanged from the original publication. SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug information (NCADI) and the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) network distributed thousands of copies of the original guide over the years. It is a benchmark by which curricula are developed and educational programs and professional standards are measured for the field of substance abuse treatment in the United States.

TAP 21, *Addiction Counseling Competencies: The Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude of Professional Practice*, can be ordered free of charge by contacting SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse at 1-800-729-6686 (English or Spanish or 1-800-4874880 (TDD)).

# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



## Governor's Office

### PROCLAMATION

#### **PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE JUSTICE WEEK**

**September 30 – October 6, 2007**

*WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system is charged with providing programs of supervision, care, and rehabilitation as well as providing balanced attention to the protection of our communities, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed by juveniles, and the development of competencies to enable children within the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system to become responsible, productive members of their communities; and*

*WHEREAS, the mission of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system is based on the principles of restorative justice, which gives priority to repairing the harm done to crime victims and communities and defines offender accountability in terms of assuming responsibility and taking action to repair harm; and*

*WHEREAS, the mission is premised on the belief that crime victims, communities, and juvenile offenders must all be regarded as clients of the juvenile justice system; and*

*WHEREAS, community protection refers to the fundamental right of all Pennsylvanians to be free of, and feel safe from, crime. Victim restoration emphasizes that crime can forever change its victims and that restoration programs should seek to restore crime victims, to the greatest extent possible, to their pre-crime status. Youth redemption embodies the belief that the vast majority of juvenile offenders are capable of change and have strength upon which treatment services can build; and*

*WHEREAS, all of the services designed and implemented to achieve this mission and all hearings and decisions under Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act must be provided in a fair, unbiased manner; and*

*WHEREAS, the Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee has adopted the following mission statement for Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system: "Juvenile Justice: Community Protection, Victim Restoration, Youth Redemption."*

*THEREFORE, In special recognition of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system and its work with juvenile offenders, crime victims, and communities, I, Edward G. Rendell, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim September 30 – October 6, 2007, PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE JUSTICE WEEK in the Commonwealth.*



*GIVEN under my hand and the Seal of the Governor, at the City of Harrisburg, on this nineteenth day of April in the year of our Lord two thousand and seven, and of the Commonwealth the two hundred and thirty-first.*

**Edward G. Rendell**

**EDWARD G. RENDELL**  
Governor

# Combating Truancy: A Community Response

By Kelly Brown, Family Services of Montgomery County

**T**ruancy has been noted by many national research studies as one of the top 10 major problems in U.S. schools. Norristown is no exception. Truant students are at higher risk for being drawn into gang involvement, drug use, violence and juvenile crime. Truancy is often the beginning of a lifetime of problems. For these reasons, police and school officials, municipal leaders, residents and community organizations in the Norristown Area School District (NASD) have developed the comprehensive and innovative Norristown truancy abatement initiative.

“The goal of the truancy abatement initiative is to promote the attendance and education of children and youth in order to become capable adults and productive citizens,” said Dr. Darlene Davis, director of pupil services, NASD. “In order to accomplish this goal, school staff and the community need to be involved in identifying the barriers to education for our young people.”

In a community such as Norristown, these barriers are many. The 2006–2007 results of the Pennsylvania Youth Survey for NASD and the Communities That Care (CTC) Risk and Resource Assessment provide some insight into the barriers to education and root causes for truancy among our youth.

“Child abuse rates, substance abuse, family violence, mental health concerns, school failure and bullying are just some of the contributing factors to our high rates of unexcused absences in Norristown,” said Kelly Brown, director of community prevention services, family services.

The Norristown truancy initiative began in 2005 with a strong emphasis on enforcement by teaming officers from the Norristown Police Department (NPD) with the home and school visitors from NASD.

“We learned early on in this initiative that enforcement alone was not going to have enough of an impact on reducing the rising trend of unexcused absences,” said Lt. Kevin McKeon, commander of criminal investigations, NPD. “Through the Norristown Area CTC and Weed & Seed initiatives, we developed partnerships and systems to not only return kids to school, but to assess and address the reasons for truancy.”

The Norristown truancy abatement initiative combines the efforts of numerous public and private institutions, including the magisterial district court, school district, local law enforcement, community-

based agencies and local prevention coalitions. The objectives are as follows:

- Develop a model strategy to intervene with chronic truants;
- Identify the root causes of truancy;
- Increase involvement of parents;
- Intervene in youth’s progression from truancy into more serious and violent behaviors;
- Increase rates of school attendance;
- Prevent school drop-out; and
- Change community norms and values regarding education.

The Norristown model is comprised of a five-pronged approach to reduce truancy.

**Prevention** – Family services, NPD and the Norristown family center have taken the lead in engaging parents of high-risk youth through outreach and parent education at community and school locations. Using several national models, prevention education programs, as well as a community-developed parent education curriculum, police officers and community partners educate parents regarding risk factors for youth truancy, gang involvement, violence and other anti-social behaviors.

**Timely Intervention** – As a part of this partnership, NASD has developed new policies and procedures to identify truant youth in a timely manner and to notify parents/guardians immediately of any unexcused absences at all grade levels.

**Enforcement** – A primary objective of the truancy abatement initiative is to return the truant youth to school through the coordination and cooperation of local schools, law enforcement and community agencies. NPD officers and the NASD home and school visitors (two patrol units) conduct continuous sweeps of the municipality three days per week for four hours per day (between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.) while school is in session. Strategies utilized by the truancy abatement patrol unit include apprehending youth who are on the streets during school hours, conducting home-to-home sweeps of youth who are deemed absent without excuse by the NASD home and school visitors and patrolling areas frequented by truant youth (drug houses, parks, known areas that experience daytime crime). The NPD issues citations to parents of youth apprehended as truant. In addition, swift and vigorous enforcement of the municipality’s daytime curfew ordinance has increased the school’s enrollment and attendance of

*Truancy, continued on page 11*



## Youth Attend Fifth Annual Southwest Region CTC Youth Conference

The fifth annual Southwest Region Communities That Care (CTC) Youth Conference was held April 21-22, 2007 at Camp T. Frank Soles in Rockwood, Pennsylvania. The conference was sponsored by the CTC organizations of Southwestern Pennsylvania and the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research (CJJT&R), Shippensburg University, through a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Thirty-two youth ages 14-17 from Duquesne CTC (Allegheny County), McKeesport CTC (Allegheny County), Tri-Boro CTC (Braddock, North Braddock and Rankin Boroughs, Allegheny County), Monessen CTC (Westmoreland County) and Blair County CTC participated in the overnight retreat along with 15 adults from the southwest region CTC sites.

Project directors, community mobilizers and program staff from the following CTC sites helped at the conference: Duquesne, McKeesport and Tri-Boro (all Allegheny County), Blair County, Cambria County, Greene County and Monessen (Westmoreland County).

The teens participated in workshops designed to increase their knowledge of the CTC process and enhance their ability to share with others key aspects of the CTC healthy youth development model. The opening session was an overview of the CTC operating system presented by CTC state trainer Bernie Galanko of Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc., and project director of Tri-Boro CTC.

Youth leaders from the Duquesne Community Mobilization Project (DCMP) and Lori Rue, Community Mobilizer for Duquesne CTC, provided ice-breakers following the opening session.

A workshop on the CTC Risk and Protective Factors was led by youth from the Monessen CTC Youth Council and Teresa Seh, Monessen CTC Community Mobilizer. Workshop participants completed various activities such as matching risk factors to the proper domain.

All the teens completed the low elements ropes course and had the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities such as paddle boats, basketball, volleyball and hiking during their stay at the McKeesport YMCA

Camp Soles facility. The youth created crafts and held a dance during their free time on the first day.

On the second day, youth participated in a workshop that included a drum circle and discussion on the positive experiences they had during the conference led by Galanko. Also on the second day, Rue and the youth leaders from the DCMP conducted an interactive workshop on leadership styles based on the Native American Medicine Wheel.

The 2007 conference was held as part of a larger effort to develop the Southwest Region CTC Youth Commission. The hope is that these youth will become CTC ambassadors and help establish youth councils at other CTC sites across the region and state. 25 youth attended a kick-off rally in November 2006 at the Schooner Youth Center in Monessen for this newly formed Youth Commission.

The youth conference was planned during a series of Southwest Region CTC Youth Commission workgroup meetings held prior to the event. Tracy Shultz, southwest region strategic consultant for CTC at CJJT&R, helped to facilitate the workgroup planning and the conference event.

The SW Region CTC Youth Council coordinators are Jodie Giocondi, community mobilizer, Carmichaels CTC, Greene County Human Services and Jennifer Ely, supervisor of child and adolescent services, Mon Yough Community Services, Inc.; and McKeesport CTC board member.

The southwest region hopes to schedule a follow-up youth event this summer and is seeking funding to continue their efforts in developing the Youth Commission. For more information about this initiative, contact [Tracy Shultz](#), [Jodie Giocondi](#) or [Jennifer Ely](#).

## Books On Board

### Lower Dauphin School District's mobile library makes learning fun for children

By Mary Klaus

(Reprinted with the permission of The Harrisburg Patriot-News, April 2007)

James Snyder strode into the colorful bookmobile as fast as his 5-year-old legs would carry him, immediately heading to the animal books. "I like dinosaurs," he said last week, holding up a book on prehistoric animals. "It's fun to get books here." Nearby, the Londonderry Twp. boy's sister, Kay, 5, reached for "The Chicken Sisters" from a bookshelf. Their 2-year-old brother, Seth, sat on the floor playing with a colorful plastic boat. Older sisters, Rachel, 11, and Elizabeth, 9, selected animal books for older children while their mother, Ann Snyder, watched her five children making themselves at home in Books on Board, the Communities That Care bookmobile.

With cartoon characters painted on the sides and colorful curtains, toys, puzzles and 4,000 books inside, Dauphin County's only bookmobile appears to be a child's delight. Lower Dauphin School District Superintendent Sherri L. Smith said it serves a serious purpose, too. "The bookmobile is one of the most valuable resources we have within the Lower Dauphin community," she said. "It provides our preschoolers with the opportunity to have a mobile library visit them. It's a terrific way to help prepare them to come to school ready to learn."

The bookmobile, created from a 1995 Rohrer school bus to serve Lower Dauphin School District's five municipalities, was purchased with a \$30,000 Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency implementation grant. The Communities That Care program affiliated with Lower Dauphin School District went to work. "We bought a used school bus because school buses last one million miles, and this had only 30,000 miles on it," said Kathy Peffer, Lower Dauphin Communities That Care community mobilizer. Rohrer gutted the bus and started the renovation. Workers from Grumbine RV of West Hanover Twp. built 24 shelves.

Peffer and others then turned the basic school bus into a kid-friendly, hands-on library, accepting thousands of donated books and went on the road in 2003 after Heidi Pinkham learned how to drive it. Three days a week, it makes 24 stops in Hummelstown Borough and Londonderry, Conewago, East Hanover and South Hanover townships. Since its inception, 725 preschoolers have borrowed 21,200 books. "Our district is so rural that many people don't know where their libraries are," Peffer said. "We want to bring the library to the

people. Although we mostly serve children, we added some adult titles in 2005."

The bookmobile looks nothing like a traditional bus except perhaps for the driver's seat. Pinkham drives it through the school district's approximately 90 square miles. Pinkham, also a preschool teacher at Hilltop Christian Nursery School in Derry Twp., last week greeted her visitors warmly.

Within minutes, several home schooled children were on board giggling as they played with puzzles, thumbed through books, talked to one another and plopped on pillows sewn by district students. Pinkham, whom the children call "Miss Heidi," laughed with them, hugged them and gave them her full attention during their 45-minute visit.

Ashlyn O'Sick, 2, came with her mother, Amanda O'Sick of Londonderry Twp. "I've brought Ashlyn here since she was four months old," her mother said while her daughter headed to the puppets, puzzles and bookshelves. Minutes later, Ashlyn brought her selections to the desk: "When Cows Come Home," "Kittens and Friends," "Billy and the Magic String" and "Old McDonald Had A Farm." Her mother smiled. "Ashlyn adores Miss Heidi," Amanda O'Sick said. "Ashlyn's an only child, so coming here lets her interact with other children. She picks out her own books, then I read them to her at home. Sometimes, she pretends to read them herself."

Betsy Mauger of Londonderry Twp. sat reading to her 4-year-old daughter, Anna. "I can count to 20," the little girl said, demonstrating her skill with numbers before assembling a Mr. Potato Head.

Heidi Grab of Londonderry Twp. brought two of her three children to the bookmobile because "they love coming here."

Peffer said that the bookmobile last year got automated circulation software to speed up the book checkout process "so that our bookmobile volunteers have more time to spend interacting with families. We also connect families to social/human services they may need such as reduced health insurance and referrals to the Capital Area Intermediate Unit for speech or hearing testing."

Volunteer to help by contacting Kathy Peffer at 566-6096 or [Lower Dauphin Communities That Care](#).



American Probation and Parole Association

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# New drug court focus is on treatment

By Kiernan M. Schalk

(Reprinted with the permission of the Lewistown Sentinel)

**D**uring a press conference on Thursday, Judge Rick Williams announced that Mifflin County has embarked on a “grand experiment” to combat juvenile drug addiction. Williams, county government officials and others working in collaboration now have established a Juvenile Drug Court in Mifflin County. There are seven individuals making their way through the program, Williams said. “The need for a Juvenile Drug Court in Mifflin County is well documented,” Williams said.

The mission of the court is to “provide intensive community-based court supervision to juveniles with substance abuse issues to help them achieve a healthy lifestyle,” juvenile probation officer Stacey Dorman said. Dorman added that the philosophy of the court is to treat addiction as a disease and to remain centered on the team concept of supervision and treatment. Williams said the court is a community collaborative effort with team members from a variety of places. He also said that each member brings his or her own particular area of expertise to the team.

In addition to Williams and Dorman, the other team members are: Assistant District Attorney Mark Remy, Public Defender Robert Ferguson, Director of Student Support at Mifflin County School District Mark Hiday, Program Coordinator at Clear Concepts Counseling Jill Pecht, Clear Concepts Counselor Paul Moore and juvenile probation officer Jonathan Reed.

To be accepted into the Juvenile Drug Court program, several things have to happen. First, the juvenile has to be between the age of 12 and 18 years, and he or she must be referred by the juvenile probation office. Team members from the court then meet and decide whether a candidate is appropriate for the program.

Once in the program, the juvenile will begin the first of four phases to help him or her break free of drug addiction. The program lasts nine to 12 months, depending on the individual needs of the juvenile. Each phase of treatment has several common factors, supervision by probation, random drug screenings, counseling, family participation, education, community service and presentation of court reports. Each phase also has specific criteria for advancement to the next phase, including the number of days the person has been drug free, and how committed the person is to recovery, educational status and overall progress. As a person works his or her way through treatment, he or she will be

rewarded for accomplishments and penalized for violations.

Williams said that this program requires a significant amount of time be invested in order to be successful. “(That is) one of the many strengths in this program,” Williams said. Although no one has graduated from the program yet — because it has not been up and running for that long — Williams said he has seen marked improvement in several individuals currently involved in treatment.

Ferguson said an important part of the treatment program is family participation. “Parents have to sign a contract with the court ... sanctions can be applied to parents for failure to abide by the rules,” Ferguson said. “We believe that treatment starts at home with families,” Pecht said. Williams closed his part of the presentation by saying he was “excited and proud to be part of this.” “This is (an) historic program,” Williams said.

## Juvenile Drug Court

### The costs:

- The average cost for a juvenile placement is \$183 per day;
- It is anticipated that the program will cost \$103,000 a year;
- To fund the program, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has provided a two-year grant in the amount of \$181,000; and,
- It is anticipated that the program will save the county \$50,000 annually.

### The benefits:

Drug Court success in other counties in Pennsylvania has been between 40 and 70 percent, as measured by the absence of new drug charges for a period of time (usually one-and-a-half to three years) after graduation from drug court. There will be a follow-up component to the Mifflin County Juvenile Drug Court in order to document the effectiveness of the program.

### Four phases of treatment:

- Assessment (30 days +)
- Treatment Investment (30 days +)
- Treatment (90 days +)
- Transition (120 days +)

# Prevention board approves model based on youth survey results

By Sam Price

(Reprinted with the permission of the Lewistown Sentinel)

A strategic plan that targets problems facing Mifflin County youth was unanimously approved by Communities That Care Prevention Board Friday. The 2007 logic model is based on youth survey results gathered from MCSD students in grades 8, 10 and 12 in 2005. 1,185 students, or 82.5 percent of eligible youth in Mifflin County, participated in the survey. Communities That Care mobilizer Nancy Records said out of 21 risk factors surveyed, 13 “held steady or decreased” from 2000 results. Records said the board will focus on the eight risk factors that increased from 2000 baseline in its logic model. She said three main problems addressed in the plan are illegal substance use, youth’s perceptions of parental attitudes toward problem behaviors and disconnection from the community. We’re looking for everyone to be champions of the prevention process,” Records said.

A combination of proposed work from the CTC action teams and the Mifflin County Regional Police is outlined to counter the risk factors with detailed steps and time lines. The logic model is separated into a three-part plan to counteract the areas the study found to be problematic. The model indicates too many youth are using illegal substances in Mifflin County. Of students surveyed, 60 percent of youth said they did not consider drinking alcohol regularly as being harmful. Juvenile Driving Under the Influence charges are also above the state average in Mifflin County, according to the model. The model lists environmental change, education for parents, district justice referrals and Cops in Shops among the activities that can effect change in the community.

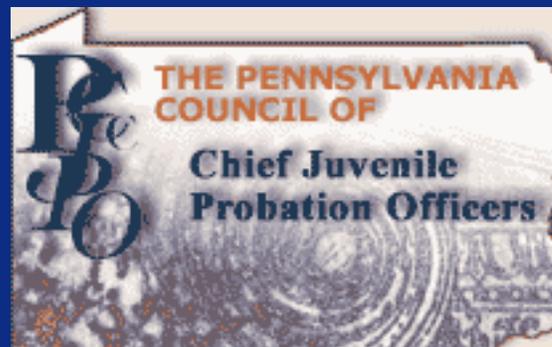
Part 2 of the model attempts to combat youth and adult perceptions about antisocial behavior and substance abuse. Survey results show youth believe parents disapprove of underage marijuana use more than underage drinking or cigarette smoking. Adult education on the dangers of alcohol to youth and the consequences of providing illegal substances were listed as planned activities that address the problem.

The disconnection of youth from their community was the topic of Part 3 of the model. Records said this section of the model dealt with the perception that “there is nothing to do in Mifflin County.” The distribution of information about youth activities through a media event action team, a community resource fair, a recreation action team, close work

with area playgrounds and recreation centers, support for the proposed skate park and mass e-mailing are listed as some steps designed to show “there is something to do in Mifflin County,” Records said.

Records also said while the survey results were helpful, next year’s survey will “certainly show a better picture.” However, she said it would take 10 to 15 years until CTC can definitively identify and combat local trouble areas. Records also said the 2005 study was done by passive consent, allowing parents to choose to keep their children from participating, while the 2000 and 2003 studies were completed using permission forms or “active consent.” Records said the results may have been altered by this difference. “Right now, we just have to keep going as hard as we can,” Records said.

***Save this Date!***



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# Erie County Earn and Learn

By: Bob Rocki, Erie County Juvenile Probation

## Data

**Enrollment**—42 began the six week program on July 5, 2006; 37 completed the program on August 11, 2006; 5 terminated

**Earnings**—Estimated total gross earnings \$22,072.66; Worksites \$19,770.85; Summer School \$2,301.81

**Restitution**—\$7,445.37 was paid to restitution and cost/fines; \$6,355.37 was paid to restitution; \$1,090.00 was paid to cost/fines. Nineteen out of 37 kids paid restitution in full; 11 youth completed 178 hours of community service; two youth fulfilled all hours owed

Since the inception of the program in 1996:

Garden has yielded 26,669 lbs. of produce that has been donated to the Second Harvest Food Bank. This year alone, the garden yielded 3,847 lbs. of produce

Restitution \$101,506.71; Cost and Fines \$7,681.79; Total \$109,188.50

## Summer School

11 enrolled; 11 completed; 1 graduated at completion of Earn & Learn

## Credits

11 Youth received 19 school credits; 1 credit in Reading; 7 credits in English; 4 credits in Math; 4 credits in Science; 1 credit in Social Studies; 1 credit in Chemistry; 1 credit in Personal Finance

The summer of 2006 saw the 11th anniversary of the Erie County Earn and Learn program. Earn and Learn is a collaborative effort restitution program between Erie County Juvenile Probation, the Erie Earn-It Program, Perseus House, the Erie School District, and the Erie County Office of Children and Youth. The goal of the program is to provide invaluable experiences for at risk youth to redeem themselves and give back to the community while fulfilling the basic principles of balanced and restorative justice.

With funding provided by the Workforce Investment Act and the Erie Earn-It Program, 42 youth were challenged to "Earn and Learn." With staffing provided by Erie County Juvenile Probation and Perseus House, these clients participated either in all day work sites, or a half-day school and a half-day work component. This year, eleven students improved their academic skills by earning 19 academic credits, which also allowed one youth to receive his high school diploma. Working at numerous work sites in the Erie County area provided opportunities for the school based probation officers to be role models and mentors for these at-risk youth. While working side by side with a probation officer, juveniles learned pro-social skills such as interacting with others, listening skills, accepting feedback and criticism and conflict resolution. At the same time,

workforce development skills, such as teamwork, daily attendance and punctuality, problem solving, and work ethic skills were reviewed with the youth.

The summer of 2006 set a milestone for Earn and Learn, which was surpassing the \$100,000 mark (\$101,506.71) for restitution collected since the inception of the program in 1996. Erie County considers this to be an outstanding accomplishment for a program that only runs six weeks each summer for the past 11 years. We attribute this to a dedicated staff that works hard to offer experiences to redeem our youth. In addition, \$7,681.79 has been paid in costs and fines since the inception of the program.

Another notable aspect of Earn and Learn is the garden project. On a 100' x 50' piece of property donated by Erie County, a total of 26,699 pounds of produce has been grown and donated to the Second Harvest Food Bank since 1996.

This past summer, 37 participants successfully completed the program. Eleven of those 37 paid their restitution in full.

### *Truancy, con't from page 4*

high-risk students, enabling our young people to access an education and increase their chances of future success.

**Follow-up** – If the Truancy Elimination Plan (TEP) meeting is unsuccessful, the parent/guardian of each truant youth is issued a citation to appear in court. Through our partnership, the district court offers these families alternatives to paying a sizable fine, such as attending a CTC parent education program or participating in counseling or another partnership-sponsored service. Partners in the truancy abatement initiative (law enforcement, school and community agencies) are present at each district court hearing for truancy violators. Social service staff members from family services, Norristown family center and other organizations meet with each family after the court hearing to assess its needs for service to prevent future unexcused absences. Family services conducts on-site intake assessments for counseling services at this time. Other services include drug and alcohol screenings, housing, mentoring programs, after-school resources, etc.

**Changing Community Norms** – For many youth in our community, a high school diploma is not viewed as an achievable goal (28.5 percent of Norristown's adult population has not completed high school). A primary emphasis of this initiative is changing the community norms related to school commitment and violence, as well as increasing the value of education. Strategies to changing community norms have encompassed environmental, social marketing and community education/outreach.

The support of the magisterial district court and District Judge Ester Casillo has been integral to the success of the Norristown truancy abatement initiative. "For 20 years I have seen youth in the court room for whom I could predict a future of problem behavior and court involvement," said Judge Casillo. "It has been my goal to try to make a connection with these young people and to show them a different path. Through the truancy abatement initiative, I am able to offer resources to the parents of these youth to help with the range of issues that are contributing to the problem behaviors."

Outcomes of the initiative include increased school attendance, increased utilization of social services and decreases in daytime juvenile crime.

"After years of increasing criminal activity, Norristown had a 12 percent decrease in part I crimes in March 2007. We attribute this decrease, in part, to the truancy abatement initiative," said Lt. Kevin McKeon, commander of criminal investigation, NPD.

Through this comprehensive truancy abatement partnership, Norristown CTC, NASD, NPD, and the district court are intervening in the cycle of truancy which will have a long-term positive impact on the economic and community stability of Norristown by helping adolescents avoid problems such as gang involvement, violence, criminal activity and incarceration.

The Norristown truancy abatement initiative is funded through Pennsylvania Weed and Seed.

Norristown truancy abatement initiative contacts:

Dr. Darlene Davis  
Director of Pupil Services  
Norristown Area School District  
(610) 630-5123

Lt. Kevin McKeon  
Commander of Criminal Investigations  
Weed and Seed Law Enforcement Coordinator  
Norristown Police Department  
(610) 270-0977

Kelly Canally-Brown  
Director of Community Prevention Services  
Family Services/Norristown Area CTC for Youth  
(610) 630-2111

## **Positions available**

### **Lehigh County**

The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department is now accepting applications for the position of Deputy Chief Juvenile Probation Officer. If you are interested in this position, please email Chief Juvenile Probation Officer [Paul Werrell](#) about details and/or send resumes to the attention of Paul Werrell at 455 West Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101 no later than June 1, 2007.

### **Cumberland County**

Probation Officer I position available within the Cumberland County Juvenile Probation Department. Interested candidates should contact Chief Probation Officer Samuel E. Miller, Jr. at (717) 240-6279 or Supervisor Hank Thielemann at (717) 240-6267.

# Forum held to address drug problems within Mifflin County

By Ashley Gurbal

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**M**ifflin County District Attorney Steve Snook described the county's drug problem as "significant" and said the public's help with prevention is crucial to controlling the situation. "We're not going to arrest our way out of a drug problem," Snook said. "I'm a believer in prevention." Snook was one of four panelists at a drug and alcohol public education forum presented Wednesday by Mifflin County Communities That Care at Mifflin County Historic Courthouse.

The "drugs of choice" among youngsters in the county are alcohol and marijuana, said Jill Pecht, of Clear Concepts Counseling. "Alcohol has always been a problem," said Pecht, who has been with the program for 12 years. "(Prevention) starts at home. Parents should be aware of the trends. ... Unless (parents) are involved, it's going to continue to happen."

Both alcohol and marijuana are "gateway drugs," meaning they may lead to more dangerous drugs, said Chuck Dicken, of Mifflin County Regional Police Department. "It's hard to think of alcohol as a drug," Dicken said. "It's legal, and it's easy to get. But I've never talked to one junkie who didn't start with alcohol."

To combat underage drinking and drug use, the county has instituted several programs, including a drug task force. County probation representative Larry Wolfe said Mifflin County is "one of the smallest counties to initiate that kind of action." "It's not difficult to get Mifflin County together," he said. Wolfe pointed to the county's response to its heroin problem — which he said peaked five to seven years ago — as emblematic of residents' efforts. "In other counties, it's tough to get (programs) up and running," Wolfe said. "It's something we've learned to do, and I'd like to applaud Mifflin County."

While heroin use has declined, Snook said, crack cocaine use is on the rise. "It's a staggering demand we must have, from the drugs we find," he said. "I can only imagine the demand we must have."

About 70 citizens filled the second-floor court room, some voicing concerns about drug problems in their own neighborhoods.

Dicken said neighborhood-watch programs and public tip-offs have led to arrests. He encouraged citizens to report suspicious activity.

honors economics students at Indian Valley High School also were in attendance. For the second year, Renninger's classes are researching the impact of alcohol on the local economy and will present their findings at a forum on April 11. Renninger asked the panel to quantify the economic impact on the county for her students, but none were able to name a dollar amount. "I don't know the number, but it's a big one," Wolfe said.

Snook said drugs and alcohol have a "tremendous impact" on the criminal justice system. "Drugs and alcohol are involved in 90 percent of criminal cases in Mifflin County," Snook said. "These are not sociopaths, not hardened criminals. A lot of them have addictions." The Mifflin County Correctional Facility is "a \$6 million building that was overcrowded the day it was built," Snook said. "And we're spending more money for overflow prisoners. It's costing thousands. It's hard to put an economic value on it. Every year, we run out of money to treat people."

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## MPOETC Offers Training

**T**he Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) offers free training courses to law enforcement officers and criminal justice staff members, which includes juvenile probation officers and staff. MPOETC has two training locations, the Computer Learning Center East at 8002 Bretz Drive, Harrisburg and the Computer Learning Center West at 500 Amity Street, Homestead, Pennsylvania. Please visit [MPOETC](#) for complete descriptions and registration information for all available courses. Classes begin at 9:00 A.M. and end at 3:30 P.M. Questions may be directed to [Vance Rosebush](#) at (717) 346-7751.

In addition to the usual Microsoft Suite applications, Mappoint is a new feature offered at the Harrisburg Learning Center. Mappoint is mapping software that combines powerful geographical mapping and analysis tools with the simplicity of Microsoft Office. Students will learn how to graphically represent data to provide a picture of data in a clear and easy-to-understand map. Students will also learn how to integrate maps into Microsoft Office documents and presentations, and save maps as web pages for others without using MapPoint to view them.

Some of Dawn Renninger's 11th- and 12th-grade

# Upper Bucks Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Coalition Recognized in 2007 White House National Strategy to Reduce Substance Abuse

By: Lee Rush, justCommunity, Inc.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) announced last month in their annual National Drug Control Strategy, that the approaches used by the Upper Bucks Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Coalition (UBHCHY) are effective in promoting positive youth development and reducing the demand for youth to use alcohol and other drugs. This recognition afforded the UBHCHY is a high honor considering it is the only community-based youth development coalition mentioned in the fifty-seven-page document that is signed by the President and sent to every Senator and Congressional Representative in the nation. The UBHCHY is an umbrella organization for Palisades Promise, Pennridge HCHY and Quakertown HCHY- three local coalitions serving Palisades, Pennridge and Quakertown school districts.

The UBHCHY Coalition recently launched two initiatives that are mentioned in the White House document- a social norms marketing campaign targeting under-age drinking and a large scale community education project to teach a concept called "Double Goal Coaching". The coaching seminars are sponsored in conjunction with Stanford University's Positive Coaching Alliance and are intended to enhance the skills of all Upper Bucks youth sports organization's leaders, coaches and volunteers. Also public and private school coaches can take part in the seminars. The social norms marketing campaign was rolled-out in the three local high schools, (Palisades, Pennridge and Quakertown) in September 2006. Social norms marketing campaigns work to change people's perceptions of what is considered "normal" behavior. After surveying over 3,000 students, the UBHCHY realized that the vast majority of teenagers in Upper Bucks do not drink alcohol, contrary to many people's beliefs. "This was the main message we shared with all of the high school populations- that 2 out of 3 teenagers do not drink," shared Ms. Lois Dodson, Chair of the UBHCHY and Penn Foundation Student Assistance Program Coordinator. "This accurate information needs to be shared with all youth and adults alike," she said. "It will help change behavior, especially for eighth graders coming up."

The Director of the White House ONDCP, Mr. John Walters, (the nation's drug czar) commented in a letter written to Mr. Lee Rush, Community Mobilizer for the UBHCHY, "Thanks in large part to comprehensive efforts of organizations like (UBHCHY) drug use is at its lowest level in more than a decade". The UBHCHY is coordinated by justCommunity, Inc., a local non-profit organization based in Quakertown. Mr. Rush, Executive Director of justCommunity, Inc., commented, "We are all so proud to be mentioned in such a publication. It gives a real boost to the students in all three high schools who spearheaded our social norms marketing campaign last fall. This is something they can continue to build on." The

UBHCHY Coalition will be sponsoring a major Upper Bucks Youth Summit in Quakertown on May 9, 2007 at the James Michener Library.

For more information about the Upper Bucks Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Coalition and its Integrative Youth Development approach to creating caring and connected communities, go to the [justCommunity, Inc.](http://www.justcommunityinc.com) website. The latest youth survey results, called the Upper Bucks Student Support Card can also be viewed at this site.

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The economic impact of drug and alcohol abuse also reaches health care costs. "The number of people testing positive for Hepatitis C — I can't even imagine," Wolfe said. "And medications ... it's mostly public health dollars."

Communities That Care mobilizer Nancy Records concluded the program on a positive note, pointing out that a 2005 survey of local youth found that most do not use drugs. Records said her organization wants to focus on those children — the non-users. "We're a community-wide collaboration, making neighborhoods worthy of our kids," Records said.

