

# **JJ** JUSTICEWORKS • JOURNAL

A quarterly newsletter published by Justiceworks, Ltd, a non-profit community justice organization dedicated to advancing policies and practices of justice that create right relationships in the communities of Portage County. Volunteer task forces of Justiceworks consider issues of mentoring, victim/offender conferencing, substance-free housing, and access to justice. Justiceworks has received grants from the State Bar of Wisconsin, the Community Foundation, the Department of Justice, St. Bronislava Church, the Polish Legion of American Veterans, and the Wisconsin Humanities Board. Developing community involvement in the justice system requires substantial assistance and commitment. To join the effort please return the registration below with your pledge. All contributions are tax deductible as Justiceworks is a tax exempt organization under Sec. 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**Justiceworks, 1547 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## **quote for a quarter:**

**"It is for us the living . . . to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced, . . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."**

**A. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address**

*Fostering forms of justice that strengthen and heal the communities of Portage County!*

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1547 STRONGS AVENUE  
STEVENS POINT WI 54481**

# Justiceworks • Journal

Fostering Restorative Justice for Portage County

03/25/09

## **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**

### **COMMUNITY CELEBRATION**

A packed house greeted this celebration event January 19, 2009 at the Stevens Point Area Senior High School auditorium. Sponsored by Justiceworks, it was highlighted by a cameo appearance by Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration supports restorative justice principles by educating our area youth and communities to the significance of the civil rights movement and the importance of equal justice opportunities. It encourages community members to participate in local restorative justice initiatives. This event is growing due to the support of many interfaith and multi-cultural organizations in Portage County.

The program featured UW Professor Jeremi Suri, named by the *Smithsonian Magazine* as one of America's "Top Young Innovators" in the humanities and sciences. Dr. Suri addressed the significance of the civil rights movement and its meanings within the context of current events. Also featured were Stevens Point resident, Fizza Razvi, who addressed the legacy from a Muslim viewpoint, the SPASH choir, hip hop group "Rhymz Suhreal" and special music from composer Will Louis-Brux.



Becky Alwin of Rhymz Suhreal leads in the singing of Amazing Grace at the Community Celebration (Photos by Doug Wojcik/Sstevens Point Journal)

## COMING UP

### **ANNUAL MEETING and MORE**

**Justiceworks, Ltd. Plans 2009 Annual Meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup> during National Law Week**

On behalf of the board of directors, Justiceworks, Ltd. invites volunteers, the voting membership and the general public to its 2009 Annual Meeting. The meeting is scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. at the Portage County Annex Building the week preceding National Law Day on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The theme for National Law Day this year is "A Legacy of Liberty" and marks the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, regarded by many as our nation's greatest and most eloquent president.

At the Annual Meeting, the Hon. Edward Brunner, Wisconsin Court of Appeals will provide the keynote address followed by presentation of the 2009 John Klismet Justice Award, program updates, music, refreshments and socializing. We encourage volunteers to attend so that we may acknowledge your contributions to our service initiatives and special events.

Annual Meeting registration and program information will be posted on [www.justiceworksltd.org](http://www.justiceworksltd.org). Please check back for event updates in April.

#### **Dates at-a-glance**

- **Thursday, March 26: "Judicial Elections and All that Jazz"** 7:00-9:00 pm. at Emy J's Coffeehouse.
- **Tuesday, April 7: Family Law Information Center Volunteer Meeting** Noon-1:00 pm. in the Courthouse Law Library
- **Tuesday, April 28: Justiceworks Annual Meeting with keynote speaker, Honorable Judge Brunner** 5:00-7:00 pm. at the Portage County Annex Building
- **Saturday, September 5: JustRunGreen09 Half-Marathon and 5K Run/Walk Fundraiser**
- **Thursday, September 17: "Judicial Elections: Navigating the Collision Course" Symposium, Stevens Point Holiday Inn**

## What's Up With Judicial Elections?

Local community members and citizens across the state have expressed concern over the rising expense and alarming rhetoric of recent Wisconsin Supreme Court elections. Misleading and deceptive advertising to promote judicial candidates marred the last election. In order to define current problems with the judicial election process and identify possible solutions, Justiceworks, Ltd. is sponsoring the following symposia:

- **Judicial Elections and All That Jazz, an evening community forum followed by live jazz music and Emy J's refreshments took place Thursday, March 26 at Emy J's in downtown Stevens Point.**
  - The forum began with a primer on judicial elections by UWSP Professor John Blakeman and featured a discussion review of the the book *The Appeal* by John Grisham moderated by UWSP Professor David Arnold. Over 40 people turned out for the event and a lively discussion of judicial selection issues and their impact on justice resulted.
- **Judicial Elections: Navigating the Collision Course, Thursday, September 17, 2009 at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point, WI (6 CLE credits).**
  - This is an all-day, Wisconsin conference on approaches to maintain the integrity of the electoral process and preserve judicial independence in the face of first amendment politics. Registration and continuing education credit information will be available in the near future at [www.justiceworksltd.org](http://www.justiceworksltd.org).

## Reality Make-over for the Family Law Information Center

Make-overs don't just happen on reality TV shows. The Family Law Information Center recently went through its own reality show make-over with wonderful results.

The reality is that 80% of poor households confront legal issues without legal assistance in Wisconsin. This statistic reflects the circumstances in Portage County. In 2008, Justiceworks, Ltd., in partnership with the Portage County Legal Aid Society, opened a self-help legal resource center for Portage County residents. Through the center, trained community volunteers with backgrounds in social work, the legal system, child support, and education provide assistance on a weekly basis for those struggling to respond to the legal system. To date, over 250 residents have come to the center seeking assistance.

The make-over began in 2008 with the remodeling of the space in the courthouse law library. The center then opened with help of in-kind support from the county, court personnel, community volunteers



and financial support from the Wisconsin State Bar Association. The make-over continued in 2009 with the purchase and set-up of work carrels, tables, chairs and filing cabinets through proceeds from grant funding,

Justiceworks, and Portage County Legal Aid Society.

The **winners** of our reality make-over are the community residents of Portage County who now have better opportunities for equitable legal outcomes.

## Restorative Youth Conferencing Services Now Open

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Justiceworks' victim-offender conferencing service has expanded its programming to include helping juveniles with deferred prosecution agreements learn how their actions have negatively impacted others.

What is the purpose of restorative youth conferences?

Restorative youth conferencing can:

- Provide conflict resolution that actively involves victim and offender in repairing the emotional and material harm caused by a crime;
- Provide an opportunity for victim and offender to discuss the offense, get answers to their questions, express their feelings, and gain a greater sense of closure;
- Provide an opportunity for victim and offender to develop a mutually acceptable plan that addresses the harm caused by the crime.

What have we learned from research?

- Victims of crime who meet with their offender are far more likely to be satisfied with the justice system.
- The process reduces stereotypes on the part of both the victims and offenders.
- Offenders who meet their victim(s) are far more likely to successfully complete their restitution obligations and to be directly accountable to the victim for their behavior.
- Considerably fewer and less serious crimes are committed by offenders who participate in victim-offender conferencing programs.

Referrals for the Restorative Conferencing for Youth program can come from criminal justice departments, health and human services or the school system. Please call the Justiceworks office for more information at 344-3677.

## *Registration now open for the "JustRunGreen09" Half-Marathon and 5K Run/Walk Fundraiser*

Justiceworks, Ltd. provides restorative justice services to the community. As an added benefit, please consider participating in a restorative health event: the Justiceworks "JustRunGreen09" Half-Marathon and 5K Run/walk fundraiser on Saturday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, of Labor Day Weekend, in conjunction with the Riverfront Jazz Festival.

This year, Justiceworks is developing a responsible environmental approach to this special event in partnership with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Event participants will receive an organic race t-shirt, refreshments from local suppliers, and recyclable race materials. To reduce waste impact, the event will continue to develop online information and registration capacity. In addition, this year will feature:

- Live music on the course: once again, live music will be heard along the scenic race course which winds its way downtown Stevens Point, across the UWSP campus, through Schmeekle Reserve and back along the riverfront path.
- Chocolate chip cookie station: for walkers this year, the event organizers are enlisting bakers to provide a chocolate chip cookie station at the half-way point.
- Pre-race spaghetti dinner; the dinner is back and available at an affordable price, thanks to the sponsorship and catering expertise of Rockman's Catering.
- Pre-race expo featured guest: Ultramarathon runner and speaker, Roy Pirrung, will appear at the spaghetti dinner on Friday, September 4th from 5:00 to 7:00 pm.;
- Pre-race Suzuki Stroll Kid's ¼ Mile Run with prizes and refreshments; and finally
- Additional bathroom facilities located at the race start!

Online and print registration information is now available at [www.Justiceworksltd.org](http://www.Justiceworksltd.org). Stay tuned for more developments. If you are available to volunteer at the event (or to bake cookies!) please call the office at 344-3677.

***Riverside House Residents  
Give Back to the Community***

The Riverside House in Stevens Point is modeled after the Oxford House ([www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org)), a democratically run, self-supporting and drug/alcohol free home for those in recovery. Riverside opened in 2006 and accepts referrals from community members seeking to maintain sobriety and form new social networks within a substance-free living environment.



Too often community members fail to overcome alcohol and drug addiction because of ongoing associations with compromised peers and a living environment conducive to alcohol and drug abuse. The residents of the Riverside House commit to a substance-free lifestyle and look for opportunities to give back to the community in order to repair the harm caused by their prior addiction-influenced actions. This year, Riverside House residents are working with community members in Wisconsin Rapids to help open an Oxford House for Wood County residents.

**Justiceworks Welcomes  
UWSP Student Intern Andrew Rowan**

Justiceworks, Ltd. welcomes UWSP student intern Andrew Rowan. Andrew is a senior majoring in sociology. Justiceworks' website raised his interest in restorative justice initiatives. With previous experience working with disabled adults in a non-profit setting, he wanted to learn more about administration of a non-profit organization. Andrew has been a tremendous help assisting with the myriad of office tasks associated with Justiceworks' community education initiatives and restorative justice service programs. He assisted with the organization of the upcoming forum "Judicial Elections and All That Jazz" scheduled for March 26<sup>th</sup>, by contacting professors, sending out event information, writing press releases, and keeping track of the registrants. Andrew is also learning about the court process for pro se litigants through participation with the family law information center and observation of court hearings.



Andrew Rowan, Student Intern

## ***From the Director's Desk***

Recently, Congressman Obey's office confirmed that Justiceworks "seed" funding through the federal government will continue for one more cycle. This action pays tribute to the ongoing efforts of community members in Portage County to recognize and address the escalating problems within our correctional system. Through his funding support, Congressman Obey recognized the innovative work being done in Portage County through the collaborative working relationship between Justiceworks, Ltd, county justice planners and community volunteers. Justiceworks will continue to develop program capacity in alignment with state and national goals to reduce recidivism rates and the dependency on incarceration to address complex social problems.

Recent research from the PEW Charitable Trust indicates that nationally 1 in 39 adults is under correctional control, up from 1 in 111 adults in 1982. The study states that high probation and parole failure rates, the continued rise in prison costs, the annual return of offenders to the community, and the economic downturn indicate the need to implement strategies that reduce recidivism and hold offenders accountable, while cutting substance abuse and unemployment, and restoring family bonds. Recommendations from the study mirror Justiceworks' evidence-based service and advocacy programs which use evaluation feedback to guide program development and operations.

The PEW study points out that only through a collaborative multi-pronged effort can we build a safer community with productive former offenders. Community members can make a difference in our justice system. Through Justiceworks, volunteers have contributed to the development of justice programs and services that improve the likelihood of equitable legal outcomes, and have participated in service and mentoring initiatives, and community outreach programs.

The extension of the federal funding that Justiceworks recently received will not be renewed again. That funding will expand program capacity and allow us to develop a diversified financial base to ensure future sustainability. The delivery of successful, cost-effective justice programs, will expand community support for the long haul. Working together, we will move in right direction. ***Katherine Munck***

## **New Partnership for Building Employment Skills**

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Justiceworks, Ltd. and Prism partnered with the Stevens Point Toastmasters club to provide a six-week Speechcraft program as a pilot project to help build employment skills for those in need. Speechcraft is a program designed by Toastmasters to develop participants' public speaking, organizational skills and self-confidence.

Justiceworks, Ltd. and Prism volunteers (Prism is a non-profit organization focused on meeting the needs of jail inmates) thank Toastmaster members Jeff Ebel, Rhonda Williams, Craig Carpenter, and Virginia Dessart for their generous contributions to this effort. Jeff, Rhonda, Craig, and Virginia conducted the meetings and provided feedback and evaluation to participants. Speech topics were diverse and included occupational skills, personal reflection, and inspirational ideas.

A participant in the seminar had this to say about his experience:

"I just got a promotion at work that requires me to give presentations, conduct orientation, and talk with others both inside and outside of the organization. The timing couldn't be better."

The program started January 14, 2009 and ran for six consecutive weeks at the Portage County Library Pinery Room. Residents of the Riverside House participated in the pilot project and continue to provide feedback for further program development.

Justiceworks hopes to build on this first effort for the purpose of delivering effective and responsive skill development programs to community members in need.