

JUSTICEWORKS · JOURNAL

**1547 STRONGS AVENUE
STEVENS POINT WI 54481**

Fostering forms of justice that strengthen and heal communities!

Justiceworks • Journal

Fostering Restorative Justice for Portage County

02/15/11

Justiceworks hires new Case manager to Administer TEAM Program.

Justiceworks welcomes Ron Carlson to its staff. Ron starts as Case Manager for the new pilot reentry program, Teamwork for Access to Employment through Mentoring (TEAM). He recently retired as Assistant Police Chief of Stevens Point after serving thirty-two years.

Ron brings a personal perspective of the justice system, shaped by his prior law enforcement experience. "I have seen the justice system as it is today, with its successes, and its failures," Ron recently commented at a TEAM presentation to the Stevens Point Rotary Club. "I have seen



individuals who have been recycled over and over again through the system, people who have lost hope or motivation to change their behaviors. Sometimes people dig themselves into holes too deep to climb out of without help. We can extend help to them through the TEAM reentry mentoring program"

TEAM is a volunteer-based mentoring program created and managed by concerned community members, providing opportunities for motivated ex-offenders to realize their potential through education, mentoring, and employment. Ron stated, "Today we can no longer simply lock someone in jail and think it a success in the criminal justice system. The TEAM program not only helps to build a safer, more productive community, but it also provides a fiscally responsible alternative to taxpayers as jail costs and populations continue to rise."

Local Retired Attorney Receives *John Klismet Justiceworks Award* For Pro Bono Legal Services

Maurice Rice recently received the annual Justiceworks' John Klismet Justice Award for his volunteer contributions to the justice system. The award was presented to Mr. Rice at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration on January 17, 2011.

Justiceworks, Ltd. presents the award in recognition of an individual's contribution to the justice system and honors volunteers whose efforts advance programs and practices of justice that secure right relationships within communities.

Over the span of his career as an attorney, this year's award recipient, Maurice Rice, gave free legal

assistance to those in need and obtained funding to support pro bono services in Portage County through his work with the Portage County Legal Aid Society (PCLAS). In addition to his volunteer work as president and past board member of the PCLAS, Maury has also served as an elected official and board member for the Wisconsin Disability Rights organization and is a current member of the Governors Access to Justice Commission. The annual John Klismet Justiceworks Award honors service which reflects character, integrity and public commitment. Award recipients model Mohandas Gandhi's quote: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."



Prism Works to Develop Employment Opportunities for Ex-Offenders

By Dan Barth

Prism, a jail ministry organization, and Justiceworks are teaming up to define business solutions to employment problems ex-offenders face as they begin the arduous effort to straighten out lives damaged by alcohol, drugs and criminal lifestyles.

Out of this on-going effort, TEAM, a community-based reentry mentoring program, was created to help out. Providing mentoring and assistance with job searches for motivated ex-offenders, assessment and screening for potential employers, TEAM is already making a real difference in the lives of ex-offenders demonstrating real motivation to change.

The TEAM program is temporary financed through a two-year federal grant. Justiceworks and Prism board members know that long-term financial sustainability is essential to continued success of the program. Consequently, Prism is turning its attention to potential development of feasible for-profit business ideas that will sustain the TEAM program and provide stable, sober employment for qualified TEAM participants.

Prism members meet in the Sheriff's Department training room on the second Wednesday of the month over the noon hour. Community members are welcome to join in the discussion as Prism, Justiceworks members and volunteers brainstorm to identify viable start-up business ideas. Please plan to attend and bring along your creative ideas, personal and professional expertise, and enthusiasm.

Portage County Legal Aid Society Driver's License Reinstatement Program

by Attorney Melissa Dalkert

One of the barriers for individuals in Portage County, especially for those with lower income, is a lack of a valid driver's license. Licenses can be lost for a number of reasons: failure to pay fines or to keep current with a payment plan, back child support owed, a prior operating while intoxicated citation or conviction. There is bus service available in Stevens Point and Plover, but outside of those towns, it is extremely difficult for a person without a license to get to work and run necessary errands.

In an effort to address this need, the Portage County Legal Aid Society has launched a pilot program to aid individuals working to get a valid driver's license. A person may be eligible for representation if they are a resident of Portage County, are financially eligible, and do not have a current criminal case involving a lack of license. When an individual is found eligible, the Portage County Legal Aid Society will work to match her or him with an attorney on a pro bono basis. The pro bono attorney will then work to find the reason or reasons for the license suspension or revocation and work with the individual to address them. For persons facing a criminal charge, they are able to receive attorney representation through the Wisconsin State Public Defenders

***A Thousand Thousands – Thanks to you*
is a pilgrimage. Join it!**

Don and Betty Ermintanger created a Justiceworks Endowment Fund with the Community Foundation. One thousand gifts of one thousand dollars will provide an endowment that will allow Justiceworks, Ltd. or similar justice initiatives to continue for the indefinite future. All contributions are tax deductible as the Community Foundation and Justiceworks, Ltd. are tax exempt organizations under Sec. 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



Photography by courtesy of John Morser

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Community Celebration

On Martin Luther King Day, the community came together to honor the occasion at the Justiceworks MLK Community Celebration event held at the local high school auditorium. Guest speaker, Mr. Zaki Ali J.D. shared with the audience his experiences overcoming obstacles growing up as an underprivileged youth with a single mother and absentee alcoholic father. Inspired by King's "I Have a Dream" message, Mr. Ali overcame a learning disability and delinquency to earn a masters and law degree. His inspirational message captivated the youth in attendance; many waited in line to meet him after the event was over. Mr. Ali shared the stage with community contributors to the event, which included the Monteverdi Master Chorale, UWSP tap dancers and SPASH choir. Also, participating was Judge Frederic Fleishauer, who presented the Justiceworks John Klismet Award for volunteer excellence to 2011 award recipient, Mr. Maurice Rice. Mr. Rice addressed the growing need for pro bono services and funding in Wisconsin in his acknowledgment remarks.

On behalf of the community and its Board of Directors, Justiceworks thanks the MLK program participants and organizing committee members for their service. Each volunteer program participant and committee member spent many hours in preparation for the event. In addition, Justiceworks thanks the following faith-based justice supporters for their funding and in-kind support:

Baha'i Faith	St. Paul's United Methodist Church
Frame Presbyterian Church	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Newman University Parish	Stevens Point Quaker Meeting
Redeemer Lutheran Church	Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Saint Bronislava Catholic Church	UWSP Multicultural Resource Center
Trinity Lutheran Church	Islamic Society of Central Wisconsin
SPASH Student Stage Technicians	Peace United Church of Christ

Comfort Suites of Stevens Point	Starbucks for coffee refreshments
for speaker accommodations	

Demand for Victim-Offender Conferencing Services Grows in 2011

January 2011 ushered in the New Year with an influx of cases to the Restorative Justice Conferencing for Youth program. Current cases involve juvenile offenders ranging in age from 10 to 15 years. One case involves a series of car thefts that will potentially result in conferences with the offender and five of his victims.

Restorative Conferencing for Youth is a victim-offender conferencing program for juvenile offenders. The service is offered as a sentencing option through the Boys and Girls Club Peer Court program and the Portage County Health and Human Services deferred prosecution program. Victim-offender conferencing is a process that provides interested victims an opportunity to meet their juvenile offender(s) in a safe and structured setting with the goal of holding the offender directly responsible for his or her behavior, while providing important assistance and support to the victim. Offenders referred to our program begin participation in a victim-offender conference. Only offenders willing to accept responsibility for the harm they caused are brought into the program to be held accountable to those they have harmed. The conferences are dialogue driven and bring together victims, offenders, families, supporters and other community stakeholders impacted by the crime. With the support of trained volunteer facilitators, participants are guided to work toward a mutual agreement that repairs the harm and promotes healing between all participants.

In 2006, the Planning and Policy Advisory Committee recommended a list of planning priorities to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. One of its recommendations was an increased focus on victim offender mediation and community services. Victim-offender conferencing and mediation services are endorsed as an evidence-based practice by the American Bar Association.

Upcoming Restorative Justice

Activities

February 8: Job interview and resume training for Volunteers in Probation and TEAM participants

February 14: Valentine's Day and opening of on-line registration for the Justiceworks Half-Marathon and 5K race

February 22-25: Second Chance Act Reentry Conference, Washington D.C.

March 4: Equal Justice Conference, Marquette Law School, Milwaukee

March 3: TEAM presentation to the Plover Kiwanis Club

March 15: Family Law Information Center presentation to Family Connections

FLIC courthouse hours M-F noon to 1PM and the following pretrial dates:

Feb. 3 – AM only

Feb. 8 – All day

Feb. 11 – AM only

March 4 – AM only

March 8 – AM only

April 11 – PM only

April 27 – AM only

“You must be the change
you wish to see in the world.”

Gandhi

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Community Involvement in Offender-Based Programming

It is vital for community members to understand the problems facing our local justice system if our community is going to succeed in reducing our high recidivism rate and associated costs. Research stresses the importance of community involvement in identifying and delivering effective justice solutions.

What is the problem?

Wisconsin's criminal justice system is marked by a continuous cycle of crime followed by probation or incarceration, followed by repeated crime. Statistics are dismal for Portage County: 91% of our inmate population has been in jail before; 60% have been in jail four or more times. The majority of the jail population is currently serving time for drug or alcohol related crimes. In the past, Portage County has spent as much as \$700,000 annually to transfer inmates out of the area due to overcrowding. Our community has repeatedly denied funds to expand detention facilities. Wisconsin has had a tradition of responding to crime by a "one size fits all" approach. This runs contrary to the reality that offenders come from a myriad of circumstances with wide-ranging individual needs. While incarceration may keep individuals from re-offending in the short run, the majority of these individuals return to our communities post-incarceration with pronounced needs that serve as obstacles for their successful reintegration into the community.

What is the solution?

It is widely understood among criminal justice experts that new approaches to dealing with offenders in probation and parole are successful in reducing overall recidivism. A 2007 study by the Crime and Justice Institute estimated that properly executed rehabilitation and treatment programs targeted precisely at specific offender groups can reduce recidivism by 10-20%. Some programs examined in these studies have achieved reductions in recidivism as high as 31%. This statistic mirrors the recent research findings by UWSP Professor

Robert Brush and Department of Corrections Supervisor Shaun Morrow in examining the initial results of Justiceworks' alternative sentencing program, Volunteers in Probation (VIP). Their initial statistical analysis revealed a promising 9% recidivism rate for offenders enrolled in the VIP mentoring program. The VIP program focuses on providing mentored individualized support for its program participants. This is in alignment with research recommendations indicating that to prevent individuals from re-offending, they must receive the necessary interventions to refrain from re-offending once the period of supervision has ended, including improvements in sustained sobriety, employment, health, family relationships and accountability. These intervention strategies underlie both Justiceworks' offender-based community programs: the VIP alternative sentencing mentoring program and TEAM, the reentry mentoring pilot project currently in its first phase of implementation.

What are the benefits of community-based justice programs?

While a reduction in the recidivism rate tremendously benefits public safety, it also is reflected in substantial savings to Portage County residents. For example, a 10% reduction in new crimes committed by parolees over one year alone can save Wisconsin taxpayers an average of nearly \$70 million in incarceration costs.

What can you do to support reduction in crime and crime-related costs? Support your local evidence-based justice programs. Volunteer as a mentor in the VIP and TEAM programs. Let your local elected officials know that you regard evidence-based recidivism reduction programming a vital part of our local justice system.

Wisconsin is behind other states in committing to evidence-based programs to reduce recidivism. The system as it currently stands has failed to adequately reduce overall recidivism rates. Change is on the horizon but it won't reach our backyard without support, leadership and action from our local citizenry.

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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 Strong's Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481

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quote for a quarter:

Punishment is the last and least effective instrument in the hands of the legislator for the prevention of crime.

John Ruskin,
author, art critic, and social reformer (1819-1900)