

# Justiceworks•Journal

*Fostering Restorative Justice for Portage County*

08/17/12

## **Just Run Organizers** **Race to the Starting Line for Sep 1<sup>st</sup>!**

The Justiceworks annual fundraiser, Just Run Half-Marathon and 5K Run/Walk, will, once again, head off a weekend of jazz music along the river in Stevens Point with the Riverfront Jazz Festival on Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. Registration for the event is available on-line through Active.com. Registration forms are also available at Emy Js, Adventure 212 and the Stevens Point YMCA. Additional race event information is accessible at [www.Justiceworksltd.org](http://www.Justiceworksltd.org). The race fee is discounted through Thursday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. Online registration closes after August 30<sup>th</sup> but runners and walkers may still register by dropping off a registration form at the Justiceworks Office , 1547 Strongs Ave, Stevens Point or at the Pfiffner Building, behind the Pfiffner Park Bandshell, from 5-7 pm. on August 31<sup>st</sup> or at Pfiffner Park in front of the bandshell on Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup> beginning at 6:30 am..

All race proceeds support restorative justice programming for community members in need. The Justiceworks Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers thank these community partners\* for their generous contributions to this important fundraiser event:



# **PLEASE PATRONIZE JUST RUN PARTNERS WHOSE CONTRIBUTIONS MAKE US RUN:**

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Carl Coffman and Brass Performance Group  
Sean Connors and Alex Meronek Percussion Performers  
Casie Daniels and Brass Performance Group  
Tracy Feldman Guitar and Vocal Performer  
Center Point Chorus of Sweet Adelines  
Chris Yahnke Mandolin Performer  
Jenni Yang and Woodwind Performance Group

### **INDIVIDUAL DONORS**

Race participant endowment fund contributors

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

### **RACE EVENT VOLUNTEERS**

Thank you to our invaluable race course volunteers and coordinators!

\*Sponsors and donors at time of printing

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

Similar to other non-profit organizations, Justiceworks currently faces funding challenges. In the midst of local, state and federal funding challenges, the work of community volunteers dedicated to sustaining our current level of justice-related community services buoys me up. Our community-based non-profit organization serves offenders wanting to change life paths through our mentoring programs, individuals without legal representation through the Family Law Information Center, victims through the Make It Right restitution mediation program, and the full community through public education forums on justice issues.

To sustain these programs, since my resignation this spring, I am now serving as interim executive director to help our non-profit organization transition from federal funding to local and state funding, and to a new staffing infrastructure. The positive outcomes from our service programs, coupled with community commitment to these programs, help ensure Justiceworks' ability to grow and develop new funding sources. Together as a community, we have come a long way in improving our local justice system and policy orientation. We will continue to do so in the months ahead. If you would like to help, please make a point of participating in two upcoming fundraisers. Please plan to:

- Eat at Noodles, Inc., Division St., Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, from 4-9 pm. 10% of proceeds from food purchases made during these hours will be donated to Justiceworks.
- Run, walk or volunteer at the Just Run Half-Marathon and 5K event on Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Our organization's motto states: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world" Gandhi. You can help be the change you wish to see in our justice system through your participation in our fund raising events.

Katherine Munck - Executive Director

## **FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER**

When Gabby scheduled an appointment in the Family Law Information Center this past July, she did so without knowing the mark of distinction she represented. Gabby's appointment, marked the 1,000<sup>th</sup> recorded individual to seek assistance from the Family Law Information Center (FLIC) since opening its doors in the fall of 2007. Assisting pro se, or unrepresented, family law litigants, the FLIC has become what some consider an indispensable resource to the court system in Portage County.

For the court, judges and staff, the FLIC means that an unrepresented litigant appearing before a judge or family court commissioner will have the necessary paperwork completed, will have been instructed on the advisability of proceeding pro se, and will be ready to present their family action in a court of law. For agencies like the Clerk of Courts and Child Support Agency, the FLIC has become a go-to resource for the unrepresented litigants they serve. The staff spends less time answering the questions of 100's of pro se litigants and more time focusing on other duties.



Jamie Kiener FLIC Director

Well-prepared litigants require fewer repeat visits before the court, and streamline court proceedings, ultimately saving precious resources for Portage County.

For litigants, the Family Law Information Center represents a place they can go to have non-legal questions answered, paperwork explained and the family law procedure simplified with step-by-step instructions. Emotional issues often confront litigants, and navigating a complex set of procedures and rules can compound their problems. The staff and volunteers at the FLIC alleviate the procedural issues, allowing litigants like Gabby, the 999 before her, and the many yet to come, to focus on other important matters.

# What's a Deferred Prosecution Program?

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Justiceworks administers the Portage County Deferred Prosecution Program under a contract with Portage County. A criminal offender who is accepted into the program enters a written agreement with the Portage County District Attorney's Office to hold the case open while the offender participates in the program. Most, but not all, of the participants are first offenders in misdemeanor domestic violence cases. After approval by the court, the District Attorney's Office sends the agreement to Justiceworks for monitoring.

The District Attorney's Office initially selects cases for screening by the office of Portage County Justice Programs. The Portage House Director Zachary S. Bishop evaluates each case using interviews and several assessment tools. The evaluation then goes back to the DA's Office with a recommendation whether to accept the offender into the program. For evaluations with a positive recommendation, the report includes recommendations for program conditions.

Typical program requirements include alcohol and other drug abuse assessments and treatment, the Domestic Abuse Alternative Program offered by the Family Crisis Center, anger management classes, mental health counseling and treatment, or participation in the Women's Support Group at the Family Crisis Center. Other conditions have included community service, restitution, and parenting classes. Most offenders remain in the program for a year.

Offenders who successfully complete the deferred prosecution agreement may have their charges reduced or dismissed. Although the program offers some defendants a chance to avoid criminal penalties, its design holds them accountable for their actions. They must appear for interviews every 90 days, submit monthly reports, and comply with their conditions. Successful performance in group programs requires them to admit wrongdoing, and hold themselves accountable to the group moderators and to the other program participants. Participants in the program must also pay program fees, and comply with other program rules.

For victims of domestic violence, the program offers a way to intervene before a court case has been completed, and a way to get offenders into treatment programs designed to get at the underlying problems in a relationship. Deferred prosecution also benefits the families involved in domestic violence. It allows them to avoid paying fines and court costs out of household income which reduces resources available for treatment programs and other family needs. It may also reduce the offender's sense of anger and resentment which add tension in the household.



Tom Baehr, Director, Deferred Prosecution Monitoring Program

Justiceworks has administered deferred prosecution cases since July 2009. Of one hundred six men and women referred to the program, fifty-seven successfully completed its requirements. Only sixteen people were discharged unsuccessfully; three did not complete the program for other reasons. There are 30 open cases at this time.

## **TEAM PROGRAM PROGRESS**

It has been a little over eighteen months since I joined Justiceworks as case manager for the TEAM program. In that short amount of time I have learned so very much. In my thirty two years as a police officer, I had always felt that I understood the people that I interacted with or perhaps even arrested. What I have learned here, is how little I really knew. Only now do I fully understand the hurt and damage suffered by our clients as children. This by no means excuses their behavior, but it does help to understand and appreciate the challenges they have faced in their formative years.

In working with people in the TEAM program there is no greater reward than watching and helping individuals regain their lives or perhaps begin it over. One fifty two year old man's comment on why he wanted to be in the program was, "I am here because every decision and action I have made in my life has been wrong, I want to learn the right way to think and act." When clients form positive relationships with both mentors and the staff of Justiceworks, bridges of trust and respect have been built. These contacts often may be the first positive relationships clients have formed in their lives. It creates a safety net and sounding board for their decision making processes that they can trust.

Employment has been an overall success. Most people are able to obtain a job thru contacts and networking, as well as working with employment agencies. Recently we have teamed with the WIA program thru Forward Service Corporation. Thru their program, a number of clients enrolled in Technical College courses will find a career rather than just a job.

Approximately sixty individuals have come thru the doors of Justiceworks in that eighteen months, and of those, only one has committed a "new" crime or offense. A small handful of others have committed technical or rule violations of their probation during that time. We help individuals shape and improve their lives, and that in turn makes our community safer and stronger. It is a pleasure to serve these individuals and the community in such a positive way.

Ron Carlson - TEAM Program Director



## ***Mentoring as a Volunteer in Probation***

The Volunteer in Probation (VIP) program provides a sentencing option that offers mentoring, supervision, and assistance to misdemeanor offenders who demonstrate a desire to change the risky behaviors which often result in offenders returning over and over to the criminal justice system.

Offenders identified as potential candidates for the VIP are assessed to identify their risk to re-offend, and to determine their needs to help lower their risk to re-offend. The assessment helps ensure that the program can meet the offender's needs and that the offender is appropriate to work with a community volunteer. The courts then place the offender into the VIP program. Community volunteers work on a one-on-one basis with the probationer for the period of supervision.

Offenders meet with their volunteer mentor on a frequent basis and occasionally with the VIP Case Manager. This allows close supervision of the individual and provides a relationship of support. The VIP program requires a high level of commitment and accountability by the offender to successfully complete the requirements of the program. Research demonstrates that offenders are more receptive to change when monitored through community initiatives like the VIP program.

In most cases, upon successful completion of the program requirements, the case against the offender is dismissed. The offender avoids the permanent impediment of a conviction record. The offender has also received the benefit of support and mentoring from a community volunteer with individualized attention to the offender's needs in facilitating stable employment, family relationships, pro-social relationships, education, and financial wellness. In many cases AODA and mental health needs also receive serious attention.

A typical sentence to the VIP program may vary from six months to two years, but the requirements are usually completed within a year. If the offender is unsuccessful in meeting program requirements or is charged with another offense at any time during the program, the offender may be dismissed from VIP and returned to court for conviction and sentencing.

Many people who successfully complete the VIP program have

made remarkable changes to their lives through sustained motivation and by forging pro-social relationships with, perhaps, the first positive role model that they've had in their lives. The strength of the Justiceworks VIP program lies in quality of community volunteers that Justiceworks is able to recruit and in the volunteers' selfless dedication to helping others.

If you might be interested in volunteering as a mentor with Justiceworks, please contact Kurt Helminiak by calling 715-344-3677 or emailing to [kurt.helminiak@justiceworksltd.org](mailto:kurt.helminiak@justiceworksltd.org).

Kurt Helminiak - VIP Program Director

### Upcoming Calendar for Justiceworks

**Tuesday, August 21, Noodles & Co. Fundraiser 4-9 pm., Division Street, Stevens Point**

**Wednesday, August 22, Justiceworks Board of Directors Meeting, Jordan Park, 5 pm.**

**Friday, August 31, Just Run Half-Marathon and 5K Pre-registration, Pfiffner Building, Pfiffner Park, 5-7 pm.**

**Saturday, September 1, Just Run Half-Marathon and 5K, Pfiffner Park, 7:00 am. Half-M Walker Race Start, 8:00 am. Half-M/5K Runner Race Start**

**Wednesday, September 12, Volunteers in Probation/TEAM Reentry Mentor Meeting: Motivational Interviewing, Lincoln Senior Center, 1519 Water Street, 5:00 pm.**

**Tuesday, September 18, Family Law Information Center Open House, Portage County Courthouse 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 4:00-6:00 pm.**

**Wednesday, September 26, Justiceworks Board of Directors Meeting, Conference Room D, Portage County Courthouse, 5 pm.**

**Tuesday, October 2, Family Law Information Center Volunteer Bimonthly Meeting 1:00 pm.**

**Wednesday, October 24, Justiceworks Board of Directors Meeting, Conference Room D, Portage County Courthouse, 5 pm.**

# **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's different this time. This time we aren't fighting the Yankees, we're fighting our friends. But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they're still our friends and this is still our home.” Atticus Finch to Scout.

Harper Lee, “To Kill a Mockingbird”

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**1547 STRONGS AVENUE  
STEVENS POINT WI 54481**

*Fostering forms of justice that strengthen and heal communities*