

## Making Things Right: Meaningful Community Service for Juvenile Offenders

Douglas Thomas and Mary Hunninen  
© National Center for Juvenile Justice  
March 2008

Community service is a common strategy used by juvenile courts and probation departments as part of their strategies for dealing with juvenile offenders. The quality of the community service experience can range from punitive to redemptive. The position taken in this Special Projects Bulletin is the community service is an important and valuable tool and that meaningful community service can go a long way toward increasing offender accountability, restoring victims, re-connecting youth and community, and making things right again.

The Bulletin defines and describes community service, makes a distinction between voluntary community service and mandated community service, and addresses the effectiveness of community service. Community service efforts in three jurisdictions are highlighted – Clark County, Washington, Deschutes County, OR and Lehigh County, PA. Each of the jurisdictions provides insights into understanding meaningful community service and provide tips for designing and implementing meaningful community service projects.

*Anyone may use the content of this publication as is for educational purposes as often and for as many people as wished. All we ask is that you identify the material as being the property of NCJJ. If you want to use this publication for commercial purposes in print, electronic, or any other medium, you need our permission. If you want to alter the content or form for any purposes, educational or not, you will also need to request our permission.*

### Introduction

Somewhere in America a young person wakes up and makes his way to a work site where he checks in with an adult supervisor. This young person may be assigned to do any number of things - clear trash and weeds from a vacant lot, sort bottles and cans in a recycling center, paint a fence that surrounds a ball field in a city park, or help elderly citizens in a retirement home.

At some point during the day, the young person will talk with the supervisor to get further instructions, to get some work tips, or maybe even just chat about the things in general. He may have a chance to talk with other

adults or young people at the work site. After a couple of hours, the young person may be relieved of his duties and told to report again tomorrow, and the next day and the day after that. Over time, the vacant lot gets cleaned up, tons of bottles and cans get recycled, the ball field is ready for play. At the same time the young person has had a chance to meet new people and learn some skills. After a while, he is informed that his service time is completed and he no longer has to get up early to report to the work site.

But he receives no pay for his efforts. He is, in fact, repaying the community for his harmful behavior that occurred before he came to work. He is completing juvenile court appointed community service hours. Hopefully he feels that, through these efforts, he has given back a little of what he took by his delinquent actions and along the way learned some skills, made some friends, and become invested in his community. With any luck, the people he met and worked with will remember his efforts and start to think of him as a young person who has worked hard to improve the community and is an asset, not a liability.

The experience described above is not an isolated incident. In fact, it happens every day in communities throughout the nation. Tens of thousands of juvenile offenders across the U.S. perform community service each day. While there are no national estimates of the quantity of community service hours, at least two states include the number of offenders participating in community service and the number of community service hours completed in their annual state-wide juvenile justice report cards. In Pennsylvania, for example, juveniles in over 68% of the 17,576 juvenile delinquency cases closed in 2006 completed 566,941 hours of community service.<sup>1</sup> South Carolina's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) reports that about 38% of the 8,116 cases closed DJJ in FY 2006-07 had community service obligations and that over 85,000 hours of community service were completed.<sup>2</sup>

---

## What is Community Service?

In the general sense of the term, community service refers to services volunteered by individuals or organizations to benefit a community or its institutions. This simple definition includes at least four important concepts that need to be considered further—community, service, volunteer, and benefits.

While *community* can have many meanings, for our purposes we will think of community as a body of individuals defined by some organizing charter or definable geographic characteristics—a town, a neighborhood, or a county. *Service* refers to actions that assist the community and its members. *Volunteer* suggests that the service is offered of one's free will and without consideration for compensation. Finally, the service should *benefit* the community. That is, the results of the community service should be both valuable and valued. However, community service is not one-sided. The person providing the service should also benefit.

Court mandated community service is work performed by an offender for the benefit of the community as a formal or informal sanction. It should be designed to help those offenders make amends for their actions while serving as active participants in community building through a wide range of activities. It is important to make the distinction between *voluntary* and *mandated* community service.

### ***Voluntary Community Service:***

Voluntary community service has long been a traditional mainstay of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques throughout the U.S. It is also an essential component of most youth serving organizations, including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Boys Girls Clubs, etc. In

addition, community service is an increasingly important component of secondary and post-secondary educational requirements.

In fact, there exists in this country a long tradition of volunteering services and talents to the community that precede the concept of mandated community service. Volunteering “is an essential component of the attitude, spirit, and willingness of Americans to help others and a key indicator of what is called a community’s ‘social capital.’”<sup>3</sup> Research has demonstrated a relationship between high levels of social capital within a community and that community’s indicators of quality of life. Communities with high levels of volunteerism and community service are more healthy and vibrant places to live and work.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Mandated Community Service.***

What if the community service is not volunteered, but mandated as a result of an adjudication in juvenile court or a sentence in criminal court? This is a pretty important distinction. An individual who volunteers to complete community service tasks is already pre-disposed to making a positive contribution to a community or its institutions. On the other hand, the juvenile offender who is ordered to complete community service as a requirement of his or her

disposition is being coerced to volunteer services, which presents a punitive element.

In spite of this distinction, the goals of voluntary community service and mandated community service should be the same, namely: facilitate civic engagement; enhance connections between individuals and the community; enhance life skills; increase employability; teach basic job skills; and facilitate connections with positive adults and youth peers in the community. The benefits of community service are the same whether voluntary or mandated—all community service participants have opportunities to:

- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills,
- Gain a better understanding of how to make constructive changes,
- Form meaningful relationships with others,
- Develop a deeper understanding of community problems,
- Gain a sense of individual effectiveness, and
- Recognize the need for involvement.

Research indicates that completing community service as a young person is negatively associated

---

## ***Earning Redemption Through Community Service***

***Community acceptance of law offenders “requires a concrete demonstration that the individual acknowledges the damage caused and is doing something to make things right. This positive affirmation of responsibility and the willingness to make amends to the community through visible voluntary civic service can be a fundamental step in changing one’s public image from liability to asset thereby earning one’s way back into the good graces of the community.”<sup>7</sup>***

– Bazemore and Stinchcomb (2004)

---

with future crime, and is positively associated with employment, family formation and other indicators of stability—all of which are protective factors against criminal behavior.<sup>5</sup> In addition, research indicates that civic service may provide an avenue for personal growth, promote self-esteem, increase personal dignity, improve self-image, increase the ability to empathize, and provide opportunities for mentoring, apprenticeships, and employment.<sup>6</sup>

## Meaningful Community Service

All community service should be meaningful. Community service should be of value to the community and benefit the person providing the service. In the case of community service that is mandated by courts, it should address the harm that was incurred by the delinquent or criminal activity, and wherever possible should restore victims in some tangible ways and offer redemptive opportunities for offenders. Mandated community service projects are more meaningful when they involve the community, help people, encourage youth to be active in the community, increase offender empathy towards victims, facilitate changes in community perceptions of the offender, and help offenders develop a more positive sense of self.

Court mandated community service, by definition, is not voluntary as community service hours are ordered or assigned. However, if offenders do not voluntarily choose to participate in community service, they may be provided opportunities to choose which community service projects they want to participate in and which will be most impactful in terms of addressing the harm

incurred by their actions, while increasing community connections and building skills. There is a big difference between *having to* participate in local recycling efforts because that is all that is available and *choosing* to participate in local recycling efforts from an array of other meaningful community service projects.

Community service is more meaningful for offenders when it creates opportunities for them to work side-by-side with community volunteers. A community work service crew comprised only of offenders and supervised exclusively by court/probation employees limits the opportunities for community integration and may be perceived by all parties more as punishment and less as service. Furthermore, community service is more meaningful when community volunteers assist with the identification, development, and completion of community service projects, including the monitoring, supervision, and mentoring of offenders.

Community service projects that provide tangible benefits to people in need are more meaningful than those that are done in isolation. For example, projects that provide direct services to elderly or homebound in a community—providing firewood or small home improvement projects—are likely to have a tangible, positive impact on the recipients of the service, the community and offenders. That is not to say that community service projects completed in isolation and with no direct personal impact are unworthy. Very often they provide much needed services and sometimes they may be the best one can do. The trick is to find some way to make them more meaningful by increasing awareness of the effort and value of those types of projects.

Community service projects that encourage offenders to become and

remain active in the community are meaningful. Making a positive and lasting connection between the offender and the community is one of the primary objectives of meaningful community service. While there are no assurances that offenders will feel more connected simply because they have provided services to the community, community service projects should be designed to increase the probability of increasing those connections and strengthening the offender/community linkages. This may be accomplished by providing opportunities to participate in projects of high value to the community, working with citizen volunteers, establishing mentoring relationships, and developing employable skills.

Meaningful community service is predicated on righting a wrong and paying back a debt that has been incurred by the offender's actions. Community service then should be designed to increase an offender's sense of accountability and empathy towards victims whenever possible. Identifying a range of community service projects that address delinquent behaviors—directly or indirectly—will go a long way toward addressing accountability/empathy (e.g., vandalism and graffiti clean-up crews may help make the connection between delinquent acts and service to remedy harm). Tailoring individual community service requirements to a juvenile's offending behavior may also help to establish this connection. For example, requiring DUI offenders to provide service in accident trauma wards or clean-up after automobile accidents may help clarify the relationship between an offender's actions and service to the community.

Community service can go a long way toward de-mystifying juvenile offenders and helping to change the community perception about individual offenders and juvenile

---

court-involved youth in general. Many people, particularly those that have been victimized by crime, have negative perceptions of delinquent offenders. Community service provides a powerful medium for changing those negative perceptions and laying the foundation for re-integrating wayward juveniles into the mainstream of the community. Instead of being perceived merely as threats or liabilities to the community, juvenile offenders who participate in community service can provide demonstrable evidence of their ability to contribute and to be community assets.

Community service can also go a long way toward helping youthful offenders redefine *themselves* as welcome and contributing community members. By providing many hours of meaningful service, working with positive peers and role models, and repairing broken connections with the community, juvenile offenders have opportunities to redefine themselves as contributors and redefine the community as a welcoming environment instead of a hostile environment.

## Community Service in Three Jurisdictions

To illustrate the meaningful application of mandated community service, we identified three jurisdictions that have developed effective strategies for requiring juvenile offenders to participate in community service activities that work toward restoring the community, increasing connections between offender and community, and providing opportunities for skill training—Clark County, Washington; Deschutes County, Oregon; and Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

---

### *An Important Tool for Restoring Community Well-Being*

***Effective work service is an important tool in holding youth accountable by helping them realize the impact of their actions, while also restoring our community's sense of well being. For those youth court-ordered to perform restorative work service, about 77% completed their full obligation.***

– Deschutes County Juvenile Justice Department

---

#### ***Deschutes County, Oregon***

Deschutes County has a population of approximately 115,000 people and is located in central Oregon. It is part of the Bend, Oregon Metropolitan Statistical Area. In 1996, Deschutes County passed a resolution adopting the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ). The Deschutes County Board of Commissioners reaffirmed their support with a 2003 BARJ Resolution.

The Deschutes County Juvenile Community Justice Department is composed of various service teams designed to accomplish goals based on Balanced and Restorative Justice principles. These teams work collaboratively in a dynamic, informative group composed of members from each service team, which helps to achieve a comprehensive approach to services for each youth served.

Community service is regarded as “a vital and effective tool in holding juvenile offenders accountable for their offenses”<sup>8</sup> by the county’s Juvenile Community Justice Department. The Department, which uses the term *restorative community service*, takes advantage of its many benefits. Restorative community service provides juvenile offenders with meaningful opportunities to repair the harm caused by their actions, while making contributions to the communities in which they live. Restorative community service

projects are designed to provide services that are highly valued by the community and by the offenders themselves and that provide young offenders with excellent opportunities to make meaningful connections with positive adult role models. Restorative community service in Deschutes County is also designed to provide opportunities for offenders to learn job skills, get vocational training, and other important life skills.

Restorative community service is a two-way street. The active involvement of both offenders and the community (both community institutions and individual citizens) is critical to the success and effectiveness of restorative community service programs. To that end, the Deschutes County Juvenile Community Justice Department actively seeks to collaborate with business and civic partners who are able to provide meaningful work service opportunities and projects. A few of the many court-community service collaborations include:

- Working with Habitat for Humanity on building renovation projects,
- Partnering with local law enforcement agencies and paint suppliers on graffiti removal efforts,
- Providing assistance to seniors, disabled, and financially needy (e.g.,

- construction of wheelchair ramps and bunk beds, snow removal, yard clean-up),
- Participating with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to build bird nesting-boxes,
- Volunteering at the annual domestic violence agency's children's festival,
- Assisting home owners and neighborhood associations,
- Working with the County Parks and Recreation Department to advance fire fuel reduction efforts,
- Providing services for terminally ill patients in hospice care centers,
- Delivering firewood to low income families to help heat their homes.

Community service hours may also be converted to cash to pay victims of juvenile crime. Through a program called Fresh Start, the Department paid victims of crime over \$17,000 in restitution for service work completed by young offenders participating in the program.

Individual citizen participation is also important. The Department recruits a wide range of volunteers who are willing to donate their time and skills to work side by side with delinquent youth on restorative community service projects. Deschutes County places a strong emphasis on the use of community volunteers to help identify community service projects, monitor and supervise completion of projects, and serve as mentors to youth offenders. In 2006, 68 volunteers contributed 3,920 hours of their time, talent, and energy to a wide range of activities. There are at least 15 sites in the county providing individual community service options and mentoring for young offenders.

Deschutes County's restorative community service projects yield tangible outcomes. In 2007, juvenile offenders collected and hauled nearly 63,000 pounds of trash and yard debris to local landfills. Of the 482 cases closed by the Department in 2007, 258 cases included community service obligations and accounted for over 6,408 hours of restorative community service. This represents 84% of the ordered or assigned community service obligations. More than 79% of the juvenile offenders represented in these closed cases completed all or more of the restorative community service ordered or assigned. These figures are consistent with four-year trends. Since 2004, an average of 6,847 hours per year have been completed, representing an average 83% of court-ordered community service hours.

### ***Clark County, Washington***

Clark County is located in the southwestern part of Washington, across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon. In 2004, Clark County's population was estimated to be 392,403. Vancouver is the county seat and the largest city in Clark County. The Juvenile Court is a division of the Clark County Superior Court and operates under the administrative authority of the Clark County Superior Court judges. Clark County's justice system is based on the Balanced and Restorative Justice approach that values the needs of victims and the community

The Clark County Juvenile Probation Department provides many excellent opportunities for juvenile offenders to participate in community service. But it will not offer community service that is conducted in an unproductive manner. *Unproductive community service* occurs when offenders are required to provide unpaid, mandatory services that have no connection to the harm resulting from their actions, to benefiting the victim or the community, to building relationships between the juvenile and the community, or to skill building. In the Department's view community service that lacks these ingredients falls far short of achieving the beneficial outcomes that are inherent in service to the community.

The Department administers what it also calls *restorative community service*, which is designed to achieve purposes beyond punishment. Clark County defines restorative community service as activities that enable juvenile offenders to demonstrate accountability and use their service as an opportunity to make things right with victims and the community by providing work service that is valued. In Clark County, restorative community service is considered to be:

- *A personal obligation.* Community service becomes restorative when the offender understands that a harm has been incurred by his or her actions and that a personal

---



---

## ***Accountability and Positive Contributions***

***Melding accountability for harms done with the chance to work along side community volunteers to make a positive contribution to one's community creates the opportunity to integrate these youth into the fabric of the community.***

– Clark County Juvenile Court

---



---

---

---

## ***Restorative Community Service: How Do Victims Benefit?***

***Restorative Community Service focuses on both the accountability of offenders and on changing their future behavior and thinking. These objectives are viewed by many victims as the two most important goals for the juvenile justice system. They want offenders to learn from the offense and to never again victimize other people. In addition, victims of crimes have voiced a desire to see offenders become better people, people who will contribute in positive ways to the community.***

– Clark County Juvenile Court

---

---

obligation exists to repair that harm to the fullest extent possible. When this condition exists, the activity ceases to be merely punitive and becomes an avenue to making things right.

- *An opportunity to make right.* Community service becomes restorative when the activity represents, even if only symbolically, an opportunity to do something of value that can make amends for the wrong that resulted from the offender's actions.
- *Work that is valued.* Community service becomes restorative when the service represents something of value to the victim, the community, and the offender. Service that is not connected to the harmful action, of no apparent value to the community, or that is clearly punitive is not restorative.

The Clark County Juvenile Court also attaches two additional requirements to community service to make it restorative. To be restorative, the service must provide opportunities for *integration* of offender and community, in which the offender works toward becoming a valued

member of the community while the community, in turn, becomes *of value* to the offender. Integration is achieved through service performed side-by-side with other community members; offenders, through their service begin to alter the way they are perceived by the community. They become, in the eyes of the community, individuals capable of contributing to the health, well-being, and peace of the community. Individual change occurs when juvenile offenders begin to see themselves as contributors to the community and when they are able to recognize that others see them as contributors as well.

For restorative community service to occur, both the offender and the community must be adequately prepared. Community members and organizations must be ready to work with juvenile offenders by getting information and support from the juvenile justice system regarding the mission, goals, objectives, and benefits of restorative community service. Offenders are prepared for restorative experiences through "intentional conversations with juvenile court staff" that help them understand that they have a personal obligation to make right and an opportunity to make

amends. Community preparation comes in the form of collaboration between the Clark County Restorative Community Service Coordinator and community groups to identify meaningful work service projects where the offender works directly with volunteers from the community. Work service projects in Clark County include:

- Services for the elderly and low income;
- Environmental enhancement projects;
- Neighborhood improvement efforts;
- Neighborhood clean-up days;
- Neighborhood park improvement projects;
- Habitat for Humanity building projects;
- Natural habitat enhancement projects with groups like Friends of Trees;
- Working with food banks and homeless shelters;
- Working with 4-H to grow food for local food banks;
- Working in senior citizen homes.

Community volunteers are an important facet of Clark County's restorative community service efforts, providing positive role models and connections that integrate the youth into the community.

### ***Lehigh County, Pennsylvania***

Lehigh County, located in the Lehigh Valley region of eastern Pennsylvania, has a population of approximately 312,000. The Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department, located in Allentown, has the responsibility for delivering necessary and appropriate services for juveniles and families that come before the Juvenile Court.

---

Victim restoration—along with community protection and youth redemption—is a primary goal of the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department. In Lehigh County, indeed, throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is believed that a juvenile who commits a crime harms the crime victim and the community and, as a result, incurs an obligation to repair that harm to the greatest extent possible. Community Alternative Work Service (CAWS) is one of the mechanisms employed by the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department to facilitate restoration of victims and community.

A great deal of community alternative work service gets done in Lehigh County. In 2007, the Probation Department reported that community service had been ordered or assigned in over 1,000 cases closed during 2006 and that those cases accounted for over 39,600 hours of service to the community. At the then minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, the fiscal value of that community service was estimated to be about \$223,965.

Lehigh County is committed to achieving its victim restoration goal, in part, through community service that is predicated on programs that help offenders come to grips with and make amends for the harm caused by their offending

behavior while building upon their strengths and teaching them competencies that can be used to enrich their lives. Furthermore, Lehigh County's Community Alternative Works Service programs help offenders become better connected with their communities by requiring court staff and community volunteers to work directly and constructively with offenders, becoming role models and mentors even as they require the offenders to follow strict sets of rules governing their behavior and holding them to a high standard in completing their work.

As the name implies, community is an essential ingredient of Lehigh County's Community Alternative Work Service programs. The County Probation Department has recruited over 200 non-profit organizations, agencies, and municipalities as community service worksites. On any given day in Lehigh County, there are several juvenile offenders working somewhere on some community service project. It could be at a shelter, in a school, at a food bank, cleaning a street, painting a building, or just helping someone in need. The list of community service projects in Lehigh County is virtually endless, new projects are developed all the time, but examples include:

- Shoveling snow for the elderly and disabled in the winter.
- Wrapping donated toys for needy families, and even answering letters from Santa, during the Holidays.
- Tending three community gardens in the summer, raising as much as 3,500 pounds of vegetables for local food banks and soup kitchens.

But community service is not just logging hours on meaningful service activities in Lehigh County. Many, if not all, of the community service projects are designed to build on the strengths of the offenders and to teach them valuable competencies they can use to enrich their lives. For example, the Young Offenders Program is a six-week education program for 10 to 12 year-olds who are too young to participate in most community service projects. The Department also runs a mentoring tutoring program on the campuses of Moravian and Muhlenberg Universities as well as the Lehigh Community College. Offenders assigned to provide work service at places such as Computers for Kids and The RePlace Center are able to develop technical skills.

## Is Community Service Effective?

Community service seems like a winning intervention—it provides pro-social, productive, and time consuming activities for court-involved youth that also contribute to the health and value of communities. Offenders are offered opportunities to be accountable for their behavior through service to the community and the community is offered an opportunity to reclaim members who have gone astray.

But, beyond face value, is community service effective? The

---

### *Lehigh County Worksite of the Year*

*The Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor was selected as the 2004 Community Alternative Work Service Worksite of the Year. In 2004, Lehigh County probationers completed a total of 1,178 hours for the organization. One of the projects involved the re-vegetation of Blue Mountain's Little Gap area. In addition, court involved youth conducted cleanups and installed posts in Hugh Moore Park as well as helping maintain many miles of rails to trails.*

– *Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department*

---

## Lehigh County Community Alternative Work Service (CAWS) Program

These programs are utilized to hold Lehigh County youth accountable for their delinquent offenses. Whenever possible the Department attempts to find community service opportunities that improve youths' competencies.

**CAWS I** - Juveniles perform community service as a condition of their probation. The amount of hours juveniles must perform is based on the seriousness of their offense. Community service is performed at over 150 non-profit agencies throughout the county and on work crews.

**CAWS II** - Young Offenders Program - This program specifically targets youths between the ages of 10-13. These youths are held accountable by attending nine hours of classroom instruction. Youths must complete weekly homework assignments, and present in which victim awareness issues are highly emphasized.

**CAWS III** - This is the restitution program and it is funded through the revenues generated at the Allentown Recycling Center. Juveniles in this program are given monetary credit for their community service hours, and victims receive compensation for their losses when the youths complete their hours.

**Out Of School Suspension (OSS) Program** - When juveniles are suspended from school it is a condition of their probation that they report to the courthouse at 8 am. They are then assigned to a community service project during the time they would normally be in school.

bottom line, the thing that most people want to know, is whether community service works. There are several factors to consider. At the operational level, people may want to know if community service opportunities exist and if offenders are participating in those opportunities. In the short-term, people may want to know if community service obligations are being met and if offenders, victims, and communities are satisfied with community service efforts. In the long-term people may want to know if community service is having its intended long-term consequences. Does community service repair the harm? Are victims made whole? Are communities safer? Are offenders better integrated into the community? Are they ongoing contributors to the health and well-being of the community?

Unfortunately, while some community service programs have been documented, assessed, and evaluated, not enough has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of community service, particularly of community service by juvenile offenders. A great deal of what has been done in this regard is

summarized by Gordon Bazemore, Ph.D., (2006) in "Measuring What Really Matters in Juvenile Justice," a monograph on juvenile justice performance measures. In his summary, Bazemore reviews several descriptive studies of community service initiatives that provide "examples of community service projects that not only repair harm and have obvious public benefit but also clearly develop and showcase the talents and assets of participants." These examples, he says, "meet the theoretical and practical requirements for achieving multiple impacts including changing the image of youth under correctional supervision, community building, and meeting a range of specific needs."<sup>9</sup> Bazemore's review includes a summary of the pragmatic characteristics and impact of community service programs.

- **Pragmatic Characteristics:** Evaluations of community service programs tend to document the number of participants, community volunteers, and, in particular, the "large and significant amounts" of labor and

estimated monetary value. Community service evaluations sometimes document victim, community, and even offender satisfaction with the services provided and generally find satisfaction with community service to be "quite high." Some evaluations focus on system impact by documenting the reduction in formal supervision and correctional populations by providing an alternative to formal supervision, detention, or incarceration. These types of studies appear to show "potential, though mixed results."

- **Impact Research:** Impact evaluations of community service outcomes have demonstrated that community service has "performed well" in achieving variety of impacts, including reductions in recidivism. In fact, most studies on the impact of community service tend to focus on recidivism. In general, Bazemore informs us, "studies comparing community service participation with alternative



sentences document some reductions in recidivism, or at worst, *no increase in recidivism.*” Evaluations that examine intermediate impacts of community service (e.g., improvements in self-concept) tend to focus on juvenile offender populations.

Bazemore concludes that “while the research literature on community service is largely positive, especially regarding concerns about recidivism and community support, much remains to be learned about the quality dimensions of service, about how specific service efforts—and service participants—are actually perceived by community members, and about how correctional participants view service.”<sup>10</sup>

## Good Versus Bad Community Service

Can community service be bad? It may be argued that any form of service to the community is good and, hence, there is no such thing as bad community service, just some service projects are not as good as others. But this is not necessarily the case. It is possible to create bad community service.

Community service that is merely punitive is bad community service. Punitive community service includes activities designed to punish, humiliate, hurt, exhaust, or put labels on offenders. Bad community service will have the opposite effect of meaningful, restorative community service. It is designed to punish offenders, not restore victims/communities. It has the effect of further alienating juveniles and communities. It perpetuates the perception of offenders as alien to the community—outsiders, unworthy, burdens, and threats. At the same time, bad community service serves to confirm the

offender’s perception of the community as a hostile environment—foreign, unwelcoming, and vengeful.

Chain/road gangs are examples of bad community service. Cool Hand Luke style community service—requiring offenders to work long, hard hours along roadways doing busy work in uniforms that clearly mark them as offenders is the most common example. However, any activity that is undertaken for merely punitive reasons, is particularly harsh or unpleasant, or is basically meaningless with no benefit to the victim, community, or offender probably qualifies as bad community service. Not only are these largely wastes of time, but they may have lasting negative consequences as well. It takes just about the same amount of effort to provide meaningful community service as it does bad community service. So why not just identify and develop meaningful, positive community service projects in the first place.

## Tips for Developing Meaningful Community Service

The jurisdictions highlighted in this *Bulletin* provide important insights into how one develops meaningful community service. For example, when community service is important to juvenile courts, victims of juvenile crime, juvenile offenders and the community, it becomes meaningful. In addition, creativity in developing community service sites and opportunities adds to the meaning of community service. Meaningful community service should also be restorative community service. Finally, meaningful community service is worthy of celebration.

*Community Service is Important.* When community service is integrated into an agency’s mission

and goals, it becomes important. By definition, it becomes a priority for judges, juvenile probation staff, service providers, and juvenile offenders. Inclusion of community service as a clearly articulated goal demonstrates to the community and to victims of juvenile crime that the agency is committed to addressing juvenile crime in meaningful, tangible ways.

This does not have to happen all at once. In Lehigh County, for example, realizing the importance of community service was an evolutionary process. In the beginning, Lehigh County assigned a single probation officer who split responsibilities between a supervision caseload and managing the probation department’s community service program. As the significance and importance of community service became increasingly apparent, the department continually increased the necessary manpower to achieve its community service goals. Lehigh County’s judges and masters have an excellent working knowledge of the program and routinely order community service. In 2007, almost 80% of all cases closed by the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department were required to complete community service.

In Deschutes County, restorative community service projects are carefully selected and prioritized using a list of specific criteria developed to help guide Department staff in identifying the restorative elements of each project being considered. The Department actively seeks input and project ideas from crime victims, community partners, and even youth who have completed their assigned community service hours. Projects that enable the community as well as the youth to feel ownership and investment in the outcomes clearly increases the level of importance people place on the projects and increases the

---

likelihood of successful completions.

The youth as well as the community needs to see the value of the project being completed and believe that the work is meaningful. Providing a daily orientation to the youth, educating them about the project being performed, and taking the time to explain who they are helping through their work and why, is one additional step the Deschutes County Juvenile Department takes in an attempt to help youth connect with their community in a meaningful way. Furthermore, it helps to relay the importance of each job being performed and reinforce the belief that each youth's contributions are of value.

In Clark County, restorative community service is an intentional, integrated program that is integral to their Balanced and Restorative Justice mission. Eric Gilman, Clark County's Restorative Justice Coordinator & Community Programs Supervisor argues that restorative community service "cannot succeed unless it is part of a broader way of thinking and working."

***Creative Community Service:***

Agencies should be expansive and creative in developing meaningful community service opportunities, they should move past simply having youth put in hours doing generic service like trash pick-up. Tom Ganser, Lehigh County Probation Supervisor, believes that being *creative* is where Lehigh County "really shines." Lehigh County does not shy away from alliances with other community groups to achieve their community service goals. While some relationships come and go, some, like their recycling program, have developed into lasting relationships.

The Allentown Recycling Center has made it possible for Lehigh County

---

---

***Community Service - Part of a Broad Vision***

***[Community service] has to flow from a broader "vision" of what the community is seeking to accomplish through its response to crime. Unless crime is seen as being primarily about harm and that causing harm incurs an obligation to make amends and that in making amends the offender can actually gain a place of acceptance in the community as a positive citizen it is going to be hard to convince the community the offender and even one's own staff in the value of this way of doing community service.***

– Clark County Juvenile Probation

---

---

to repay victims over \$300,000 in restitution. Lehigh County has been an integral part of Habitat for Humanity in the county. The county's School Suspension Program requires any juvenile under probation supervision to participate in community service when they are suspended from school. Lehigh County's Firewood Project requires probationers to split, stack and load wood as heat fuel for low income families. Other creative community service opportunities include community gardens, snow shoveling for the elderly and disabled, and working with local fire companies on their breakfast and dinner fundraisers.

Creativity is an important component of Deschutes County's approach to restorative community service as well. The Department encourages the exchange of ideas and increasing the number of creative community service opportunities by recognizing the strengths of youth and programs, addressing staff and department goals, and extending an open invitation to work alongside other agencies and community partners on restorative service projects. For example, the Department has partnered with Wild Wings Raptor Rehabilitation Center in nearby Sisters, Oregon. Staff from the Rehabilitation Center contacted the

Department about the possibility of youth crews assisting in the removal of old barbed wire fencing from public and private lands responsible for causing injury to birds of prey and other area wildlife. Recognizing the "restorative" opportunities in this project, the Department agreed to help develop and maintain the wire removal program. In turn, the Rehabilitation Center staff agreed to provide an educational component by bringing live birds of prey to youth working on the project and discussing the environmental impacts of old fencing. The Department removed over 5,000 lbs of wire the first season and looks forward to continuing this partnership for years to come.

The Gardening Project in Deschutes County provides another example of creative restorative community service. This partnership with Central Oregon Master Gardeners and a local community garden provides the opportunity for youth (including youth detained in the juvenile detention center) to plan, prepare, plant, maintain and harvest a vegetable garden, alongside other community groups and master gardeners. All vegetables are harvested and donated to local community

---

---

## ***Creative Community Service: Advancing Restitution Through Community Service***

***In Lehigh County, a community service program was designed to provide a means by which juveniles may also help satisfy restitution obligations. The funds generated from the Department's recycling program, at the Allentown Recycling Center, are placed in a separate fund. Juveniles who are unable to meet restitution obligations (i.e., offenders who are too young to work) can then be required to complete an assigned amount of community service hours equal to the amount of restitution they owe based on the prevailing minimum wage. A check is released to the victim from the recycling fund when the juvenile completes their hours.***

– *Lehigh County Juvenile Probation*

---

---

kitchens to help support homeless and hungry community members.

In Clark County, creative community service is a direct result of a restorative “vision” for community service. If community service is perceived as both an obligation to make amends and an opportunity to include youth into the fabric of the community, it automatically requires one to look for different kinds of community service opportunities. Eric Gilman reminds us that “every single community, of any size or complexion has community groups, organizations, members who are engaged in activities that they believe make life better for themselves and their community.”

From Gilman’s perspective, the list is “actually endless.” However, it does take work. It is the job of the juvenile department to make the first move to contact community groups and potential restorative community service sites. The good news, he says, is that most of these groups are very receptive. Over time, as the message of the value of restorative community service work gets around and community groups may begin to contact the

Department on their own. Clark County Juvenile Probation staff make presentations to over 100 potential restorative community service sponsors each year.

***Restorative Community Service:*** The community service programs in each of the jurisdictions included in this *Bulletin* are firmly rooted in a balanced and restorative justice philosophy. They all strive to create community service opportunities that give offenders opportunities to

make amends for their actions, satisfy victims, and improve community attitudes toward offenders. In short, the community service programs described above are designed to help “make things right” between the offender, the victim, and the community.

Deschutes County strives to provide service opportunities which are related in some way to the offenses committed to help offenders to build empathy and an understanding of how their behavior impacted others. For example, youth who have committed acts of graffiti and vandalism are referred to the Department’s graffiti removal program. Not only do these programs directly relate to the offenders crime but they provide reparation to victims and are highly visible programs increasing the community perception of safety and youth accountability.

In recent years, the Clark County Juvenile Court significantly altered its approach to community service. Rather than merely supervise “work crews,” the Juvenile Court emphasizes partnerships with community groups and organizations that provide juvenile offenders with a wide selection of

---

---

## ***Tips for Developing New Community Service Projects***

***Instead of trying to “think up” projects for youth to “do,” the juvenile department....needs to start looking at the community as the source of opportunities for where youth can provide meaningful service, along side community members. Read the local paper, read any and all local community publications. Find out what is already happening in the community. Find out who is doing the work. In most communities these groups are readily observable: Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, garden clubs, quilters, neighborhood associations, 4-H, granges, churches, American Legion, environmental groups, food banks, seniors groups.***

– *Clark County Juvenile Probation*

---

---

---

meaningful opportunities to make amends for the harms done.

***Involve the Community:*** Meaningful community service should not be unilateral, it should involve the offender and the community in a mutually beneficial relationship. One key indicator of community involvement is the number of worksites that a Department establishes. For example, Lehigh County has established over 200 different worksites for community service projects and has engaged a wide variety of volunteers (e.g., Master Gardeners and college mentors) to assist with community service projects. In addition, Lehigh County regularly solicits input from community-based agencies and municipalities regarding meaningful and needed community service projects.

Likewise, Deschutes County makes every effort to elicit restorative community service project ideas from victims, community members, agency partners and youth. In addition, the Department strives to educate community partners about restorative justice principles and the importance of providing service projects which help connect youth to their communities in meaningful and mutually beneficial ways. The Department focuses on service projects that bring the youth and community members together to accomplish a common goal and thus offers a viable opportunity for

successful and meaningful community service.

Community education and community support is absolutely essential to the success of restorative community service in Clark County. Effective community education requires a clear articulation of the restorative vision of community service. Community members are carefully taught about the relationship between community service and the legitimate needs of crime victims, the community, and the offenders. Further, Clark County probation staff strive to explain to community groups the crucial role they play in restorative community service. They have found that once community members embrace the vision of working restoratively, they are eager to partner with the justice system in doing something very important in the community.

***Meaningful Community Service Requires Preparation:*** Meaningful community service requires a great deal of preparation – offenders must be made aware of the purpose and intended outcomes of their community service activities; court staff, too, must understand what is at stake; judges should understand the reasoning behind community service; and the community must be made receptive to providing restorative and redemptive opportunities for delinquent offenders.

In Lehigh County, juveniles are prepared for community service at the front end by the Intake Department which informs all offenders that community service will be a requirement of any type of supervision. Referral to community service is automatic, the county's automated case management system generates a referral to the community service program as soon as the results of the disposition are entered with a condition of community service.

Lehigh County's juvenile probation officers are carefully prepared as well. All probation officers are expected to make sure their clients show up for their initial community service appointment. While the probation officers working in Allentown rely on the Community Service Director to make arrangements to place juveniles at a worksite or on work crews, suburban probation officers are responsible for establishing their own community service referrals. However, they are well trained and know which worksites are available and make the connections and arrangements.

Deschutes County strives to make sure that staff throughout the Department have a shared vision and belief in restorative justice principles and are able to communicate this message with conviction and consistency. They also assure that staff adopt and utilize a common language when communicating with clients, families, community members and other justice professionals about restorative community service program, and why and how projects are chosen as well as desired outcomes.

Deschutes County utilizes a number of staff/management workgroups, such as the Restorative Justice Committee and the Gender Responsive Workgroup, which represent all areas within the department including court

---

## ***Volunteers***

***Juvenile Community Justice is able to accomplish many of our goals, thanks largely to the proactive dedication of our community volunteers who help us work with youth and families. Sixty-eight citizen volunteers contributed 3,920 hours of service to help redirect youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system.***

– Deschutes County Community Juvenile Justice Department

---

---

workers, community workers, detention staff and community service. These groups provide valuable input about existing programs and practices as well as developing ideas for implementing new and/or improved restorative programs including community service projects. The Department also offers and provides free training to community members and community service partner staff and volunteers about restorative justice and working more effectively with juvenile system-involved youth on restorative community service projects.

***Celebrate Achievements:***

Completion of community service is worthy of celebration. Meaningful community service activities make worthwhile contributions to communities that should be documented, reported, and celebrated.

Lehigh County has a long history of celebrating community service accomplishments and honoring volunteers. For over 20 years they have hosted an annual luncheon for their community service worksites and volunteers. The luncheon highlights the accomplishments of the previous year. In addition, the Department awards one of their worksites with the Worksite of the Year Award. In recent years, Lehigh County has recognized some of the youth for their achievements. Typically the awards luncheon is attended by the County's Judges, Masters, and Probation Officers. On occasion, the Lehigh County Executive has participated and addressed the audience.

In Deschutes County, Department staff and youth involved in restorative community service projects regularly hold public celebratory events at key points in the project. For example, a key-passing ceremony is often held during Habitat for Humanity home dedications in celebration of each home's completion. In addition,

---

---

## ***Community Involvement is Essential***

***We are absolutely convinced that no matter how meaningful the project, if the work is done in isolation from the community a huge opportunity and value of community service is lost. It is the working side by side with ordinary community members, who are out freely giving their time to a community service project that makes the huge pay off.***

– Clark County Probation Department

---

---

daily evaluation forms are completed on each youth participating on the community service crew. Youth are scored and given feedback immediately in several critical performance areas including attitude and behavior, work effort, and respect to peers and staff. Community Service staff forward the daily evaluations to the youth's assigned case worker who, in turn, strive to focus on each youth's strengths and positive contributions

Deschutes County hangs photographs of youth performing restorative service projects and working alongside community partners in the Department's hallways in recognition of their efforts and celebrating our partnerships and completed projects. To recognize community partner agencies and individuals, youth performing community service hours made holiday wreaths from natural materials harvested from the forest and delivered the finished wreaths along with a letter of appreciation to each recipient. In addition, every opportunity is used to recognize and thank restorative community service partners through media coverage including newspaper articles covering our restorative community service projects to radio and TV spots.

Providing positive feedback about restorative community service from the community and from offenders to probation officers and judges has

been a mainstay of Clark County's restorative community service program. The Department found a great deal of value in this type of feedback, particularly in the critical early stages of development. The Department regularly surveys both community service volunteers and juvenile probation staff regarding the implementation of restorative community service. The results of these surveys are shared with staff—both to celebrate successes and to address areas of concern.

***Other Tips for Developing and Providing Meaningful Community Service:***

In addition to making community service important, being creative, involving the community, preparation, and celebrating success, the jurisdictions highlighted in this *Bulletin* offered a wide range of other tips regarding how best to develop meaningful community service opportunities for court-involve youth, including:

- ***Communicate Effectively:*** Establish effective lines of communication with all parties, including offenders, victims, parents, judicial staff, volunteers, community partners, and the press.
- ***Earn and Maintain a Good Reputation:*** Asking permission to allow high risk youth to give back to the community is not always an easy sell. It is

**Clark County Juvenile Probation Department  
Results From the  
Survey of Community Service Volunteers (2003)**

100% of the respondents agreed that:

- there is a significant value in having young offenders work with people in the community while holding them accountable for their offenses.
- community service is an effective way to help juvenile offenders accept responsibility for their behaviors and make things right.

99% of the respondents agreed that:

- offenders made meaningful contributions to the community projects.
- offenders gained in positive ways through participation in restorative community service.

97% of the respondents reported that:

- they were willing to work with young offenders again.
- they were willing to recommend restorative community service to other community members.

87% of the respondents reported:

- a reduction in their concerns about working with juvenile offenders.

imperative to keep promises to complete a certain job, maintain control of your clients, and to do quality work. A good reputation takes plenty of consistency, performing beyond expectations on numerous occasions. At the same time, a bad reputation can spread like wild fire after performing poorly on one occasion.

- **Build Relationships:** Many projects come to life because of good things that are said about community service programs by other recipients.
- **Determine What Works in Your Own Community:** It is sometimes enticing to simply copy what another program is doing, but it's not always possible. Community service projects must address the

specific needs and strengths of specific communities.

- **Just Do It:** Get started even if you don't have the resources allocated to create and start the perfect restorative community service program. Many excellent community service programs started small and grew over time.
- **Ask Staff for Ideas:** Creative ideas for restorative community service projects which can be completed by youth in custody as well as in the communities often come from the experience of your staff.
- **Actively Seek Community Input:** The community has excellent instincts and ideas about community service project. Pay particular attention to special

community needs and/or underserved populations.

- **Actively Involve Youth:** Offenders often have useful/innovative ideas regarding service projects that are important to them and of value to others. This has the additional benefit of helping to empower youth, relaying mutual respect, and showing that their feelings, not just their labor, is valued.
- **Expose Youth to New People, Places and Experiences:** Community service is about accountability not punishment. Accepting responsibility for one's actions and giving back to the community can be and should be an enjoyable experience, particularly if the goals of teaching youth a sense of civic responsibility, building competencies and connecting youth with their communities in meaningful ways is going to be achieved.
- **Develop Community Mentors:** Community mentors can play a crucial role in elevating traditional community service to meaningful community service. Community mentors interact with offenders on a personal level, help to convey the purpose and value of service, and help demonstrate the value of the service to the community.
- **Establish a Community Service Coordinator Position:** The community service coordinator is a dedicated staff position with primary responsibility for identifying, developing, and nurturing community service opportunities in the community. In addition, community service coordinators may be helpful in terms of informing/training

staff, educating the community, providing feedback, and providing ongoing quality assurance for community service initiatives.

- **Review and Evaluate:** Identifying successes as well as failures and identifying ways to improve the restorative community service outcomes for victims, the youth and the community. Staff should meet regularly for this purpose and constantly seek feedback from youth, community partners, and other department staff about their observations and ideas.

## Stretching the Boundaries of Meaningful Community Service

In its most simple form, mandated community service may take the form of a sanction; it may simply be punitive busy work of little value to victims or community and with no redeeming value to the offender. We have argued in this Bulletin that to be meaningful, juvenile court mandated community service should address the harm inflicted by the offender, have value to victims and/or the community, enhance the connection between the juvenile and the community, and provide some level of skill building or personal satisfaction to the offender.

However, community service is a pretty elastic concept and there are many opportunities to stretch the boundaries of community service to make it even more meaningful. For example, *service learning* represents a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection that enriches the learning experience, teaches civic

responsibility, and strengthens communities. *Service in the interest of others* represents another manifestation of community service by offenders that takes the concept to a different plateau in terms of the centrality of the role of community service in justice responses.

**Service Learning.** Service-learning is conducted with the intent of changing both the recipient and the provider of community services. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.<sup>1</sup>

For example, when offenders' report to a community service site and work closely with the site coordinator to complete a series of tasks by following instructions and completing tasks in a timely fashion, they are participating in community service. It may even be very meaningful community service if it has high value to victims/community, increases the offenders' awareness of the harm caused by their actions, connection to their community, and results in positive skill development. However, the activity becomes service learning when the offenders help to design and plan the implementation of the service activity, and apply the service activities to learning, acquisition of skills, self-discovery, and comprehension of their own behavior.

**Service in the Interest of Others.** Dennis Maloney and Sandra O'Brien, Ph.D.,<sup>2</sup> suggest that an enhanced form of community service—service in the interest of others—may be a vehicle for facilitating a response to delinquent and criminal offending behavior on a “much higher plane of thinking and acting.” They argue that the traditional criminal

justice system approach is to figuratively or literally banish offenders. Service in the interest of others may be a more productive alternative because the justice system engages offenders in a process that enlists their help to build healthier and safer communities. Service in the interest of others is guided by the following basic principles:

**Reparation:** Because crime harms and breaks the peace of the victim and the community, the justice response should focus on the obligation to repair this harm.

**Earned Redemption:** Offenders who have worked to repair harm to both victim(s) and the community have earned the opportunity to be reinstated as members in good standing in the community.

**Participation:** Participation in one's community represents an investment that builds a sense of personal responsibility.

**Building A Sense of Community:** People who share a strong sense of community are less likely to violate the trust of others.

**Building Capacity:** As those who have offended participate in a process of repairing harm to victims and communities, they should gain skills and build assets that contribute to their responsible and productive participation in the community.

A justice strategy that relies on service in the interest of others as the primary context for working with offenders, according to Maloney and O'Brien, has potential for repairing harm, reducing risk, and empowering communities on a scale not previously known. For this to occur, service in the interest of others must become a primary goal of juvenile justice professionals—a focal point for planning, actions, and outcomes. Juvenile justice on this “higher plane” requires a new set of questions to guide interventions:

---

---

## *The Question to the Answer*

*When wrongdoing occurs, how can we engage the victim, the community, and the person responsible for the wrongdoing in a process that allows that person to repair harm and restore peace in a way that meets the victim's needs, develops the person's sense of connection to the community, and builds community capacity in a way that reduces the likelihood of further criminal activity?*

– Maloney and O'Brien

---

---

What must the community do to become a more peaceful place? What services do victims want or need? Where can offenders contribute most? What skills do offenders have to contribute to the community? How can service contribute to offender career interest or skill development? What behaviors or addictions, requiring treatment, stand in the way of the person being able to contribute? What type of service can be performed to allow the person to earn money to pay back their crime victim?

Service in the interest of others represents a constructive, participatory, reparative approach to justice that allows for graceful, earned redemption while building a stronger sense of community for all involved and has many benefits, including:

- Immediate opportunities to bring needed service and restitution to crime victims.
- Delivering valued, tangible, and visible benefits to communities on a very large scale.
- Contributing to the development of a better workforce for employers.
- Building a sense of community among those who have not yet felt connected.

- Engaging volunteer participation in community projects.
- Developing an appreciation among community members for those who have offended but are now serving alongside them.
- Demonstrates the capacity of all people to do good.
- Offers a natural, effective, and productive form of surveillance and guardianship for those under court-ordered supervision.
- Brings out the best for all involved.

Maloney and O'Brien suggest that community service can provide the vehicle for a justice response on a much higher plane of thinking and acting. Through community service, we may engage offenders in a process that results in healthier and safer communities. The results, they argue, will be beneficial for victims, communities and those who have offended. Through this process, juvenile offenders will have opportunities to move up a continuum of civic engagement—from being merely an object to be dealt with by formal systems, to someone who is a recipient of services, to someone who contributes to the greater good, to, ultimately, a leader in the community.

### **For More Information Contact:**

#### **Ernie Veach-White**

Juvenile Court Administrator  
Clark County Juvenile Probation  
500 West 11th Street,  
Vancouver, WA 98660  
360-397-2201  
[Ernie.Veach-White@clark.wa.gov](mailto:Ernie.Veach-White@clark.wa.gov)

#### **Eric Gilman**

Restorative Justice Coordinator &  
Community Programs Supervisor  
Clark County Juvenile Probation  
500 West 11th Street,  
Vancouver, WA 98660  
360-397-2201

#### **Deevy Holcomb**

Management Analyst  
Deschutes County Community  
Juvenile Justice  
63360 Brita Street, Building One  
Bend, Oregon 97701-9475  
541-617-3356  
[deevyh@co.deschutes.or.us](mailto:deevyh@co.deschutes.or.us)

#### **Jim Smith**

Community Service Supervisor  
Deschutes County Community  
Juvenile Justice  
63360 Brita Street, Building One  
Bend, Oregon 97701-9475  
541-388-6671

#### **Elizabeth Fritz**

Deputy Chief  
Lehigh County Juvenile Probation  
455 West Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101-1614  
610-782-3143

#### **Thomas Ganser**

Supervisor  
Lehigh County Juvenile Probation  
455 West Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101-1614  
610-782-3143

#### **Sandra O'Brien, Ph.D.**

Director  
Institute for Youth and Justice  
Studies  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
10501 FGCU Blvd. S.  
Ft. Myers, FL 33965  
(239)590-7835  
[sobrien@fgcu.edu](mailto:sobrien@fgcu.edu)



---

**Gordon Bazemore, Ph.D.**  
Florida Atlantic University  
Community Justice Institute  
220 SE, 2nd Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
954-762-5668  
954-525-7889  
[gordonbazemore@aol.com](mailto:gordonbazemore@aol.com)

---

## ENDNOTES

---

- <sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judge's Commission (2007) *Statewide Outcome Measures – 2006*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judge's Commission
- <sup>2</sup> South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (2007). *Report Card for 2007*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
- <sup>3</sup> Grimm, Jr. R., Cramer, K., Dietz, N., Foster-Bey, J., LaMonica, S., Dote, L., Manuel, C., and Jennings, B. (2007) *Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings*. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid
- <sup>5</sup> Uggen, C. and Janicula, J. (1999). "Volunteerism and arrest in the transition to adulthood." *Social Forces*, 78:331-362.
- <sup>6</sup> Bazemore, G. and Stinchcomb, J. (2004) "A Civic Engagement Model of Reentry: Involving Community Through Service and Restorative Justice," in *Federal Probation*; Sep 2004; Volume 68, Number 2
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> LaCombe, Bob (2006) *Deschutes County Juvenile Community Justice Annual Report*. Bend, OR: Deschutes County Juvenile Community Justice Department.
- <sup>9</sup> Bazemore, G. (2006). *Performance Measures: Measuring What Really Matters in Juvenile Justice*. Alexandria, VA: American Prosecutor's Research Institute.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. "What is Service Learning." [Online] 14 March, 2008. [http://www.servicelearning.org/what\\_is\\_service-learning/service-learning\\_is/index.php](http://www.servicelearning.org/what_is_service-learning/service-learning_is/index.php)
- <sup>12</sup> Maloney, D. and O'Brien, S. (2006) *Doing Good: Service and the Transformation of Criminal Justice Intervention*. Bend, Oregon: Cascade Center for Community Governance.

## ***Community Service at Work in Other Jurisdictions***

In this Bulletin, we have highlighted the community service efforts in just three juvenile court jurisdictions. However, there are many other jurisdictions across the United States that are making efforts to make things right through meaningful community service. In fact, a brief internet search identified several other communities that are working to increase offender accountability and enhance court-ordered supervision with improved community service programs. We have included a handful of descriptions below. But you may want to identify and locate innovative community service programs close to you. Or, if you believe that your community service program meets the requirements for meaningful community service, you may want to find a way to share your experience with others.

### ***Carlsbad, CA: Police Department's Juvenile Justice Diversion Program<sup>1</sup>***

The Carlsbad, CA Police Department's Juvenile Justice Diversion Program was started in 1986 to help divert first-time juvenile offenders not accused of a violent crime from the juvenile courts. Instead of sending these offenders to juvenile hall, the police offer them a chance to go before a panel of community members and peers who determine the conditions of a behavioral contract and consequences for violating those conditions. An individualized program of community service (which is often related to the offense) is usually a part of the contract. For example, if the offense was alcohol related, the teenager may be assigned community service in a detoxification center or asked to attend a Mothers Against Drunk Driving meeting. If shoplifting was the offense, offenders may be required to complete an eight-hour shoplifting course.

### ***Oswego County, NY: Fulton-Oswego Corridor Community Service Programs<sup>2</sup>***

New York's Division of Criminal Justice Services administers federal funds to local programs that target youth 7 to 15 years old. New York's Delinquency Prevention Program focuses on the risk and protective factors that research shows to be related to juvenile delinquency. Oswego County is one of forty jurisdictions across New York State that currently receive program funds to target juvenile delinquency problems. Oswego County has established the Fulton-Oswego Corridor Community Service Programs to combine youth-community service programs with informational, educational, and recreational components. Youth receive a small stipend for their community service work and are expected to participate in meetings that identify risk factors and offer intervention skills.

### ***Washtenaw County, MI: Community Service Work Program<sup>3</sup>***

Community service work, unpaid volunteer work, is a basic tool for holding youth accountable, and a tangible way for youth to "pay back" the community for the harm caused by their offense. As opposed to the traditional concept of community service as punishment, probation officers approach community service as a means of holding youth accountable and to build transferable skills. In designing community service work opportunities for youth, probation officers seek to: match the type of work project to the type of offense committed; expose youth to positive adult role models; involve the community in project design and supervision; accomplish worthwhile tasks; teach transferable skills; and bring recognition and a sense of accomplishment to youth.

### ***Spokane County, Washington: Community Service Program<sup>4</sup>***

The Community Service Program operated by the Spokane County Juvenile Probation Department is designed to provide all youth under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court (i.e., probation, diversion, truancy and at-risk-youth) with opportunities to take active responsibility for their actions to repair and make amends, at least symbolically, the damage that resulted from their poor choices and criminal activity. Community service also alleviates overcrowding and the unnecessary use of detention while still holding youth accountable for their actions. Youth complete community service obligations at non-profit agencies and engage in special projects that contribute to the community in positive ways. Youth engaged in community service activities have opportunities to work side-by-side with positive adult role models and gain new skills and work habits that can be used beyond the community service experience. A variety of public and non profit organizations throughout Spokane County participate in community service projects, including: the Salvation Army, YMCA, Union Gospel Mission Thrift Store, Cancer Patient Care, Martin Luther King Center, Spokane Food Bank and Neighborhood Community Centers.

### ***Yamhill County, OR: Community Service Work Projects<sup>5</sup>***

The Yamhill County (OR) Juvenile Corrections Division (YCJCD), community service program's mission is to provide youth a structured working environment to assist in their community service obligations, fees, fines and restitution. The Community Service program provides youth the opportunity to gain knowledge in job skills that promote a safe, stable and enriching environment. YCJCD, community service program requires participation with lessons in respect, accountability, teamwork, social skills and cultural awareness. The Community Service Program engaging in a number of projects around the county, including cleanup projects (e.g., clearing brush from canyons, blackberries from hillsides and leaves from frequently used areas around the county); cord wood projects (e.g., recover wood from various locations, cut, split and deliver to members of the community); schools (e.g., cleaning up after football games, trimming hedges, cleaning up litter, painting, spreading bark chips and weeding); parks (e.g., clear and develop trails, rake & clear debris, and build structures).

### ***Phoenix, Arizona: Project SCRUB (Stop Crime Remove Urban Blight)<sup>6</sup>***

The SCRUB program was developed in 1994 in response to increased graffiti vandalism through Phoenix. It is a court-ordered community service program operated jointly by the Maricopa County Juvenile Court Center and the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department. The primary function of SCRUB is to provide constructive work for youth that are court ordered to complete from 8 to 200 hours of community service. Most participants are repeat offenders and may have committed offenses that required detention or probation. Some community service projects that Project SCRUB participants can participate in include: assisting other agencies with neighborhood cleanups; help the Arizona Department of Transportation with highway beautification; remove graffiti; and assist St. Vincent de Paul in feeding the poor and maintaining their facility.

### ***Montgomery County, PA: Community Service Program<sup>7</sup>***

Juveniles who commit crimes in Montgomery county are required to make amends to their victims and communities. Community service opportunities are found in a wide range of places, including parks, fire houses, nursing homes, libraries, and community centers. Ideally, the community service "fits" the crime and the skills of the offender "fit" with the needs of the agency. Juveniles may work on small projects like reading to an elderly nursing home resident, mulching trails, washing fire trucks, or tutoring younger children. Others may work on a supervised work crew, which tackles large projects like stream restoration at Valley Forge Park. Besides doing something positive for the community, young offenders learn skills that they can use to obtain paid employment. About 1,100 youthful offenders are assigned community service each year. Since 1986, they have contributed approximately \$1,000,000 worth of work to community organizations

---

<sup>1</sup> Urrea, Y. "Juvenile Justice program gives offenders a second chance." [NCTimes.com](http://www.nctimes.com), February 5, 2005. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from [http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/02/06/news/top\\_stories/22\\_24\\_482\\_5\\_05.txt](http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/02/06/news/top_stories/22_24_482_5_05.txt).

<sup>2</sup> Spokane County Juvenile Court Website. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from <http://www.spokanecounty.org/juvenilecourt/detentionandalternatives/communityserviceprogram.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Program Website. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from <http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/ofpa/juvelprevfactsheet.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Washtenaw County Trial Court Website, Juvenile Community Based Services. Retrieved April 2, 2008 from <http://washtenawtrialcourt.org/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Yamhill County (Oregon) Juvenile Department Website. [Community Service Program](http://www.co.yamhill.or.us/juvenile/index.asp?sel=10). Retrieved April 2, 2008 from <http://www.co.yamhill.or.us/juvenile/index.asp?sel=10>.

<sup>6</sup> City of Phoenix (Arizona) Website. [Juvenile Diversion Programs](http://www.ci.phoenix.az.us/PRL/arythjv.html). Retrieved April 2, 2008 <http://www.ci.phoenix.az.us/PRL/arythjv.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery County (Pennsylvania) Juvenile Department Website. [Community Service Program](http://mcjp.montcopa.org/mcjp/site/default.asp). Retrieved April 4, 2008 from <http://mcjp.montcopa.org/mcjp/site/default.asp>.

## Contact Us

NCJJ, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), is a nonprofit organization that conducts research on a broad range of juvenile justice topics and provides technical assistance to the field. For additional information concerning the material in this report, contact:

Douglas Thomas  
Senior Research Associate  
National Center for Juvenile Justice  
3700 South Water Street, Suite 200  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203  
412-227-6950 (phone)  
412-227-6955 (fax)  
[thomas@ncjj.org](mailto:thomas@ncjj.org)  
[www.ncjj.org](http://www.ncjj.org)

Copyright 2008 National Center for Juvenile Justice.

Suggested Citation: Thomas, D. (2008). "Making Things Right: Meaningful Community Service for Juvenile Offenders". *Technical Assistance to the Juvenile Court: Special Project Bulletin*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

*This report was supported by grant #2005-JL-FX-K184 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent any official position, policy, or view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.*

**National Center for Juvenile Justice**  
3700 South Water Street, Suite 200  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203