



Truth In Action

Newsletter

research • demonstration • advocacy

The Council on Crime and Justice builds community capacity to address the causes and consequences of crime and violence through research, demonstration and advocacy.
www.crimeandjustice.org

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Challenge!

In April of this year, we were given a challenge to raise \$100,000 in unrestricted gifts by June 30. Special thanks to our individual donors, and in particular to our Equal Justice Circle Members, whose generous gifts have brought us so close to our goal! As of today, we need another \$25,000 to reach that goal.

To help us reach our goal, [CLICK HERE.](#)

President's Perspective

Greetings Everyone,

The Council on Crime and Justice continues to reach out to serve under-served communities who need our help more than ever in these tough economic times. While we have faced many financial challenges, our clients have faced even more. As we examine our laws, we see that every year new laws are enacted that in many cases unreasonably and arbitrarily limit the future employment opportunities of youth and adults with criminal records. At the same time, America continues to incarcerate its citizens at a far higher rate than any other country, eight times the world average. This trend has created growing numbers of individuals - disproportionately persons of color - with criminal histories from which it is increasingly difficult to make amends and move on.

We see the value of individual redemption, and emphasize its importance at many levels in our work. Many state and national leaders of both political parties have now begun to realize that a more effective approach to increasing public safety, while saving taxpayer dollars, is to treat substance abuse and mental health issues that often lead to crime; to limit incarceration for non-violent offenses; and to create policies and programs that safely support ex-offenders in their search for employment and housing. (For a recent Economic Policy Institute report on US rates of unemployment [click here.](#))

We also reach out to underserved victims of crime. This year we are focused in particular on children who witness domestic violence, so that we can stop the cycle of violence once and for all in the families we hope to serve. We are also working on behalf of Deaf crime victims with help from many in the Deaf community.

This is only a short list of our recent efforts - please read through this newsletter for more. But there is much further work to be done and we need your help to do it! While we have had to cut staff and expenses in these lean times, we have not cut our enthusiasm to help those in need and to educate the public about the needs of those on behalf of whom we have the privilege to work.

We believe that a more just society is a safer one, and several of our longtime individual supporters who believe this strongly as well have offered us the kind of challenge we like, a challenge gift of \$40,000. Our task since April has been to increase that gift to \$100,000 June's end. **Support** this effort by [CLICKING HERE!](#)

Thank you for joining us in our quest to make Minnesota safer and more just.

Respectfully,

Pamela G. Alexander, President
Council on Crime and Justice
alexanderp@crimeandjustice.org

Upcoming 2010 Events

October - MN Justice Forum

Last year over 250 people attended our Justice Forum to discuss criminal justice policy issues and to plan an agenda for the 2010 Legislative session.

November – Art In Justice

Last year over 400 people attended our first Art In Justice exhibit featuring the work of artists whose lives have been touched, in one form or another, by the criminal justice system.

Further notices and save-the-dates for these events will be forthcoming...

Announcements

On June 24th, the Council's President, Pamela Alexander, is recognized by the Minneapolis St. Paul Business Magazine as a 2010 Minority Business Honoree.

In 2009 we bid a fond farewell to a longstanding member of our Board of Directors, Paul Tschida, whose gifts to the Council over his tenure were extraordinary.

And now we welcome four outstanding individuals from our Twin Cities community to the Council's Board of Directors:

Sara Jones

Senior Major Gifts Officer
U of M Law School

Kevin Reitz

Professor of Criminal Law
U of M Law School

Donna Sherlock

Foundation Consultant

Don Trevarthen

Research and Evaluation Update

During these tough economic times it is even more important that programs understand how effective their services are and what short and long term impact those services are having on the clients who use them. As always, the Council is working on a number of internal evaluations. We are also currently conducting two external evaluations, one with Emerge's Northside Reentry Project and one with RS Eden's Continuum of Care Program.

Additionally, the Council has recently been conducting two research projects regarding domestic violence. For the past nine months, the research department has led a collaborative planning study looking at the impact of domestic violence on families, and in particular of child exposure to domestic violence. See Victim's Services update in this newsletter for information on the project. The Council also worked in partnership with the Greater Twin Cities United Way to conduct an extensive literature review on the landscape of domestic violence in Minnesota.

Two projects, based on findings from research conducted in 2009, are also in development. One will look at the resiliency factors among youth with incarcerated parents. The other will use the findings from our Philanthropic Discussions Around Reentry, carried out in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to develop a public education campaign on issues related to reentry.

To hear more about our exciting research opportunities or to get assistance evaluating one of your programs, contact Ebony Ruhland at ruhlande@crimeandjustice.org or 612-353-3011.

Public Policy and Advocacy Update

The Council's advocacy and public policy efforts continue to bring improvement in the treatment and prospects of people with criminal records – making our communities stronger, safer and more just. For information on the Council's recent successes in three significant changes to state law, please see our website: www.crimeandjustice.org.

In October 2009, the Council convened the second annual Minnesota Justice Forum, supporting policy reform efforts. Over 250 people, from persons directly impacted by criminal justice policy to legislators drafting the bills, were in attendance.

The work of the Minnesota Second Chance Coalition, which was started two years ago by the Council and partner organizations, has been instrumental in these successes.

The Council's legislative efforts, in particular our expungement bill and juvenile records reform bill, made great progress during the 2010 MN Legislative Session. Members of both parties supported the bills. Law enforcement and public safety officials spoke in favor of them. The bills were also championed by the Minnesota Second Chance Coalition, a coalition of over 45 organizations, including the Council, a founding member. Unfortunately, both bills were vetoed by the Governor after passing both the House and Senate. For more information on the bills, please visit our website.

The 2010 Minnesota Justice Forum, slated for October 2010, will provide a venue to revive both bills in preparation for the 2011 Legislative Session. Please check our website later this summer for

Director & Department Counsel
The Toro Company

We thank all of our Board members for their interest in our work, expertise, common sense and compassion, and for making a commitment to improve the delivery of justice in partnership with the Council.

Funding News

Many thanks to our **Equal Justice Circle**, a committed group of individuals whose generous gifts are our annual bread and butter.

We also want to thank the following key funders for their recent generous contributions and new or ongoing commitment to our work:

[The Minneapolis Foundation](#) for its ongoing support of so many of our projects, from our efforts to address Domestic Violence, to our work encouraging Fair Hiring, to our public policy activities, to our Art In Justice Exhibit.

[The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation](#) for its ongoing support of our work with families coping with the incarceration of a parent.

[The 3M Foundation](#) for its ongoing support of the Council's Family Strengthening Project.

[The Greater Twin Cities United Way](#) for its longstanding support of our work on behalf of victims and offenders.

[The Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation](#) for its early support of our pilot project, the Family Restoration Project.

[The Giving WoMn Fund](#) for its new support of the Council and of the Family Restoration Project.

[The Carolyn Foundation](#) for its new support of the Family Restoration

details on the Justice Forum.

Through the Council's GAUGE Project, we continue to educate employers about the advantages of developing fair hiring practices for people with criminal records. With support from the Minneapolis Foundation, we are working to develop a coalition of employers and individuals who will adopt and advocate for these fair hiring practices.

Our educational efforts also reach to individuals with criminal records. Since the beginning of 2010, the Council has provided seminars concerning collateral sanctions and potential remedies (such as expungements) to over 400 individuals at non-profit and government agencies throughout the metropolitan region. Qualifying participants are provided with free legal representation and assistance with expungement petitions. Finally, through collaboration with the Minnesota Legal Services Coalition and the Volunteer Lawyers Network, the Council has created an automated document form that guides pro bono attorneys through an expungement petition. Using this program, attorneys are able to assist more low-income individuals with expungements – accurately, completely, and in less time than in previous efforts. Additionally, by demystifying expungements for attorneys, we have increased our volunteer base: so there are now more lawyers helping more people on a pro-bono basis.

For more information contact Emily Baxter at baxtere@crimeandjustice.org.

Victims' Services Update **Family Restoration Project**

The Council has spent the past year in collaboration with several systems and community stakeholders developing a project to address the impact of child exposure to domestic violence. This is a unique, holistic project that will provide education and counseling to all family members impacted by family violence. The aim of the Family Restoration Project is to treat, restore, educate, and prevent further violence.

General Crime Victims' Services

The Crime Victim Liaison Project or CVL, an ongoing collaboration between the Council and the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office under the leadership of Susan Segal, continues to provide a safe venue and voice for crime victims. The Council's Crime Victim Liaisons provide the City Attorney's office a bird's eye view of prosecutors' efforts on behalf of the victim. CVL staff work closely with both prosecutors and victims, providing a resolution to victim trauma.

The Council's General Crime Victim Hotline staff and volunteers continue to provide answers to questions from general crime victims experiencing challenges such as identity theft, harassment orders, car vandalism and resources or referrals. Approximately 93 percent of the clients served from January through April 2010 increased their knowledge of services and resources after speaking with a Victim Advocate. 83 percent of the clients served from January through April 2010 increased their knowledge of the criminal justice system after speaking with a Victim Advocate.

Approximately 1249 victims were served by the Council's victims programs from January through April 2010.

Deaf Victims' Services

In an effort to expand resources to all, the Council has launched an

Project.

[Robins Kaplan Miller & Ciresi](#) for major sponsorships of many of our events, including the 2009 MN Justice Forum.

[Blackwell Burke](#) for its ongoing support and major sponsorship of Art In Justice 2009.

[Barnes & Thornburg](#) for its new support of the Council through a generous sponsorship of Art In Justice 2009.

[The MOSAIC Company](#) for its new support of the Council and sponsorship of this year's upcoming Art In Justice.

[The US Department of Health and Human Services](#) for its ongoing investment in our Family Strengthening Project.

[The Minneapolis City Attorney's Office](#) for its ongoing collaboration and support of the Crime Victims Liaison Project.

For more information contact Susan Smoluchowski at 612 353-3035 or smoluchowskis@crimeandjustice.org

outreach program for Deaf crime victims. The first meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on March 16th. The Council's Deaf victim outreach effort has completed a video intended to provide a clearer understanding of the justice system for Deaf victims, and of expectations when exposed to a crime. We anticipate continued progress and success in creating resources for and reaching out to the Deaf community through outreach at conferences and ongoing planning strategies developed in collaboration with Deaf community members.

New Volunteers

The Council's 24-hour Crime Victim Hotline continues to answer questions from victims in need. Am I eligible for any financial help due to my victimization? How do I obtain a Harassment Restraining Order? These are typical calls received by our volunteer staff. Recently, 15 volunteers completed training, and will now be volunteering in the office and on the hotline. We'd like to welcome our new volunteers to the team. ***If you need help, call our hotline at 612 340-5400.***

For more information contact Yolonde Lee at leey@crimeandjustice.org.

Prisoner and Family Services Update **Family Strengthening Project (FSP)**

In 2009, the Family Strengthening Project (FSP) continued to do exemplary work as a "Best Practices" site in our field. FSP forged ahead with work that has helped over 100 men who have spent time in prison and their families with assistance in employment, housing, family counseling, and other tools needed for their "life" toolbox. Our FSP staff have tremendous passion and commitment to advancing the lives our families.

The month of March 2010 marked the three-year anniversary of the Family Strengthening Project's demonstration period. For three years FSP has provided nationally recognized and replicated wrap-around services to incarcerated parents and their families, at the short-term Ramsey County Correctional Facility and at a number of long-term correctional facilities throughout Minnesota. March was also a transition month, mandated in the project's original charter, for the Ramsey County program, with the supervisory role shifting from the Council to Ramsey County Corrections. The Council ensured a smooth transition by providing Ramsey County officials with training well in advance of the change. Ninety days have passed since the transition and the program remains stable, in demand and continues to grow!

The Council continues to provide families with parents incarcerated in long-term facilities with case advocacy, counseling services, parenting and relationship classes and other resources to support and maintain healthy family relationships during the challenges of an incarceration and reentry process. Relationship and parenting classes, in which clients and their family members engage openly with our professionals on the topics of family relationships and intimacy, are also offered in the community.

We know that allowing time for families to connect is priceless. For this reason, we are excited to announce that FSP will be partnering with People Serving People to host a Family Fun Day, designed for the families we serve, but open to all. Fun Day will take place on the first Saturday of August, 2010, in the Council's parking lot, and

will include vendor displays inside the building.

Healthy Educational Lifestyle Project (HELP)

In late 2002, with a planning grant from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Office of Minority Multicultural Health, the Council launched HELP, a demonstration project delivering clear, concise facts about HIV, Hepatitis B and other health concerns to offenders and their partners. The goal was to enable clients to lead healthier lifestyles, promoting self-sufficiency and reducing recidivism.

As one of the Council's signature programs, HELP now assists over 300 pre and post release clients a year with health education, employment, transportation, housing, clothing and medical needs. Classes are held at the Minnesota Department of Correction facilities of Lino Lakes and Rush City. The support group, Felons 4 Felons, a stand alone component of the project, serves at least fifty walk-in participants twice a month at the Council's offices, offering dialogue and employment resources.

Despite all the good that it does, HELP is faced with the grim reality of today's economic challenges and as of June 30, 2010 will have to find other funding streams in order to continue its work. In the interim, HELP will encourage clients to seek services from one of the Council's other programs as needed. Felons 4 Felons will likely be adopted by the Family Strengthening Project until another funding stream is identified. However, the loss of HELP's classes at the Minnesota Department of Correction facilities of Lino Lakes and Rush City is a major disservice to the offender population and the reentry community.

The Healthy Educational Lifestyle Project is an outstanding program that still has life but, ironically enough, needs some help.

For more information about HELP or FSP please contact Eric McCoy at mccoye@crimeandjustice.org.

MN Prisoner Reentry AmeriCorps*VISTA Project

The Council coordinates the MN Prisoner Reentry AmeriCorps*VISTA Project, which places AmeriCorps VISTA members at host-sites across Minnesota. VISTAs in our project coordinate programs serving ex-offenders, recruit and train volunteers who serve ex-offenders, conduct research and evaluation on other projects that serve ex-offenders, and work with host-sites to train employers on fair-hiring practices and, ultimately, help ex-offenders locate stable employment.

Each participating VISTA serves for a full year at the host-site. The project currently has 19 VISTAs serving at 11 organizations across Minnesota. Together the VISTAs in the project have served more than 1100 clients, helped 79 clients obtain employment, created relationships with more than 600 employers and recruited more than 350 volunteers since they began their year of service in August 2009.

We had a remarkable group of VISTAs for the 2009-2010 project year, and we wish them all the best as they prepare to end their service in August. In August, we also enter our fourth year coordinating the VISTA Reentry Project, and welcome 15 new VISTA members and three new sites to the project. We are proud to say that "our" VISTAs have had an amazing impact on the organizations where they have served and thousands of clients have benefited from the VISTAs' hard work and dedication to their projects.

For more information please contact Sara Martin at martins@crimeandjustice.org.

Visit our Website: www.crimeandjustice.org

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