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Next Visions of Justice Forum to Feature Straight Talk about Mental Health and Delaware's Criminal Justice System

Delaware Center for Justice and Stand Up for what's Right and Just (SURJ) are co-sponsoring **Visions of Justice VI, Mental Health and the Criminal Justice System: Opportunities for Change.** The forum, which will be moderated by DCJ Board member Jim Lafferty, executive director, Mental Health Association in Delaware, will take place Friday, April 22, from 8:30 to noon at Clayton Hall on the University of Delaware campus.

"How we manage those with mental health problems who are in the criminal justice system presents challenges that beg for immediate understanding and action, that both the corrections system and the community need to address constructively" said Janet Leban, executive director, DCJ.

The imperative to examine the issue and take action is based, in part, on the following facts:

- In the United States, one-sixth of the millions being released from prison each year are mentally ill.
- While it is difficult for anyone to transition from prison to the community, it is especially hard for those with a mental illness to do so.
- Prisoners typically lose federal disability and Medicaid benefits when they find themselves locked up for more than a month. The loss of benefits is especially devastating for the mentally ill, who are highly susceptible to recidivate if they have no access to care and treatment.
- During the reentry process, unavailable or insufficient care and treatment for the mentally ill negatively impacts the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities throughout the state, straining resources that have to be expended as the mentally ill cycle in and out of jail.

The forum's keynote speaker is **Fred C. Osher, M.D.**, a community psychiatrist who for 25

years has treated patients with serious mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders. Dr. Osher has conducted clinical, research, and policy initiatives focused on these individuals, who are increasingly involved in the criminal justice system. He is currently the Director of the Center for Behavioral Health, Justice, and Public Policy and an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland, School of Medicine. Dr. Osher has published extensively and provided comprehensive training in the areas of homelessness, community psychiatry, co-occurring mental and addictive disorders, and effective approaches to persons with behavioral disorders who have contact with the criminal justice system.

Following his presentation, the Delaware panel will respond.

The panelists include:

The Honorable Joseph F. Flickinger, III
Court of Common Pleas Judge, Mental Health Court Judge

Susan K. McLaughlin
*Director, Treatment Access Center (TASC)
Department of Health & Human Services*

Dr. Martha Boston
Chief Psychologist, First Correctional Medical

An audience question-and-answer session will conclude the forum.

Registration is required for the forum, which is free. Please RSVP by April 14 by calling 302-658-7174, ext. 10 or center@dcjustice.org. If you choose to have lunch with the presenters and other colleagues and friends following the forum, the cost is \$15.00/pp. Please send a check made out to the **Delaware Center for Justice**, 100 West 10th Street, Wilmington, DE 19801. Receipt is due by April 14.

PROGRAMS
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“The ultimate goal is to develop an outcome focused, data-driven, and research-based strategic plan that incorporates a gender-responsive continuum of services.”

“...everyone who has sought help and stayed with the program has successfully received a recommendation for a pardon from the Board of Pardons.”

New Delaware Girls' Initiative Ready to Launch

Over the last two decades, Delaware, as well as states throughout the nation, saw an increase in the number of girls entering the juvenile justice system. Because programs had been traditionally designed to meet the needs of adolescent boys, girls were entering environments that provided no treatment and rehabilitation programming that was proven effective in meeting their unique needs.

Girls who enter the juvenile justice system are likely to be victims of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; they do not receive adequate education, life skills, and community support to help them gain the strength and self-confidence needed to reach their potential.

Thanks to a grant from the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, DCJ is working on a Task Force with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), the PACE Center for Girls, and Delaware juvenile policy makers, to design and eventually implement a gender-specific programming model for at-risk

young women.

At the first meeting in late January, chaired by the Hon. Chandlee Johnson Kuhn, Chief Judge of Family Court, 35 representatives from the judiciary, government, social service, and juvenile justice communities met with NCCD and PACE project leaders to review the goals and process to be followed in meeting them. The ultimate goal is to develop an outcome focused, data-driven, and research-based strategic plan that incorporates a gender-responsive continuum of services. The plan is expected to include appropriate use of home-based/community service alternatives that will help decrease the number of girls that have to be sent out of state and reduce reliance on expensive residential services.

Plans include a research phase to gather information that provides a comprehensive overview of girls in the juvenile justice system. Research will include acquiring statistics and conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

Nine Years Mark Success for Pardons Project

The Pardons Project, a joint effort between DCJ and Pacem in Terris, helps ex-offenders seek a pardon from the Board of Pardons by helping them navigate the process. The reasons for seeking a pardon, which is a form of civic redemption, are many, from acquiring a better job or getting a business license to obtaining public housing or qualifying for volunteer positions. As important, ex-offenders who are pardoned have the opportunity to recognize the level of growth and change they have achieved by going through the process.

The process involves a lot of paperwork and an appearance before the Board of Pardons. The goal is to get the Board of Pardons to recommend a pardon to the Governor, whose office conducts its own investigation before

deciding to grant a pardon.

The Pardons Project meets each month, with an average attendance of 12 to 15 people. Over the years, it has successfully helped approximately 25 people apply for and obtain pardons who are now productive, law-abiding citizens.

DCJ, Pacem in Terris, and all the volunteers who work on this program are pleased to report an amazing track record: everyone who has sought help and stayed with the program has successfully received a recommendation for a pardon from the Board of Pardons. In fact, many often return to the Pardons Project meetings to offer encouragement and support to those trying to successfully gain a pardon.

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Mark Your Calendars Now for DCJ's 85th Annual Meeting and Dinner

Featured Speaker for our 85th Anniversary event and fundraiser



Journalist, Author, CNN legal analyst, and New Yorker staff writer **Jeffrey Toobin**, whose presentation, *Big Justice – Little Justice – Injustice* will explore what happens when wealth and celebrity cross paths with justice. His remarks are based on his experience covering some of the biggest investigations and trials of the past few years... the hearings for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas... the trials of Timothy McVeigh and O.J.

Simpson... the investigation of Martha Stewart .

Invitations will be arriving in the mail mid-April! For more information, call DCJ at 658-7174 or visit our web site www.dcjustice.org

Tuesday June 7, 2005

5:30 – Cocktails

6:30 – Dinner and program

DuPont Country Club

Final Phase of Adult Reentry Mentoring Program Shows Success

A three-year Byrne grant for the implementation of the Adult Reentry Mentoring Program (ARMP) ended on January 15, 2005. With the goal of lowering the recidivism rate of ex-offenders by 10 percent within the first year after release, the program provided coordinated case management and volunteer mentoring to adult offenders, which started prior to their release and continued following reentry.

...the recidivism rate for those participating in ARMP stood at 16 percent, compared to the 57 percent rate of those released without the benefit...

As the program came to its close, DCJ reported that the recidivism rate (new felony convictions) for those participating in ARMP stood at 16 percent, compared to the 57 percent rate of those released without the benefit of this programming. Over the three-

year grant period, 48 individuals enrolled in the program, and of that number, there have been only three reported new felony convictions.

Mentors and DCJ staff worked with ex-offenders to help them overcome many difficult challenges faced during reentry. We developed an Individual Service Plan (ISP) for each of our clients, ensuring that their various needs would be addressed. We helped identify housing options and employment opportunities and assisted clients in maintaining compliance with criminal justice requirements by fostering a trusting relationship with probation and parole, aftercare, and Treatment Access Committee (TASC) staff. We also evaluated the educational and skill building needs of each client so ARMP staff was able to make the referrals necessary for continued educational development.

Congratulations are in order for all ARMP participants, DCJ staff, and mentors, whose work and shared effort have made a real difference.

PROGRAMS
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School Diversion Program Combines Fairness with Justice

by Tawnya Yetter, Program Coordinator, Victim Restoration & Community Mediation Programs

During the school year, along with their books and lunch, many young students also bring to school their anxieties, mental health problems, and the traumas and challenges that may exist in their daily lives. This stress and strain sometimes result in aggressive behavior at school that interrupts classroom activities and disrupts other students. A growing trend in Delaware schools is to file criminal charges against these disruptive students, resulting in a jammed Family Court docket.

Our staff strives to help juvenile clients get the help and support they need, while requiring them to complete meaningful and logical consequences for their bad behavior.

DCJ's School Diversion Program (SDP), which began in January 2004 as a direct collaboration between our agency and the Department of Justice in New Castle County, aims to hold young school-based offenders accountable for their actions, while giving them a second chance before they get rooted into the juvenile justice system and end up with a criminal record.

While some of our school cases involve habitual troublemakers who have exhausted the school systems' patience, a growing number of these cases are small children in families with big problems. These call for careful consideration of how to manage the problem, and the SDP provides us with the opportunity to apply firm and fair justice for a better outcome for everyone.

Since its inception in January 2004, our school diversion program has received and intensively case managed 222 cases. Our program aids its participants in getting counseling, drug and alcohol evaluations and

counseling, anger management training, tutoring, and mentoring. Our staff strives to help juvenile clients and their families get the help and support they need, while requiring our clients to complete meaningful and logical consequences for their bad behavior.

How SDP works—a case in point

"Jack" is nine years old and came to our program with a charge of terroristic threatening because he pushed a young girl and vowed he would "beat her." Though he was once well-behaved student, Jack began to develop behavior at school that was getting progressively worse. When this incident happened, the school finally filed formal charges. Jack later explained to school officials that the reason he acted this way is because he had been sexually assaulted.

Jacks' family, already confused by what was going on in the criminal case in which Jack was a victim, now was further thrown into disarray, with nine-year old Jack as a defendant in a new case.

The Department of Justice and Family Court ordered a psychological evaluation and referred Jack's case to DCJ's School Diversion Program. After the results were shared, the program was able to get Jack into counseling and to offer support to his family in navigating the criminal justice system and preparing for the trial of Jack's abuser.

At the same time, Jack was ready to take responsibility for his acting out at school, and he made a formal written apology to the school and to the other student involved. He now attends counseling regularly and is doing well in school.

Our program enabled Jack to get the help he needed to begin to cope and heal from the trauma of sexual abuse. Because he completed all requirements of our program, the State dropped all criminal charges that might have resulted from his disruptive behavior in school and given him, at age nine, a criminal record.

World AIDS Day Activities Raise Awareness in Prisons

In commemoration of World AIDS Day, DCJ sponsored several events reflecting this year's theme, *Women and HIV and AIDS*. To help raise awareness through prevention education, events were held at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution, Sussex Correctional Institution, Central Violation of Probation, Morris Correctional Institution, and Howard R. Young Correctional Institution. More than 500 offenders worked on a variety of fundraising projects to help raise money for these events.

DCJ's HIV/AIDS Peer Education program staff and the HIV Support Groups provided information to the prison population relating to the effects of HIV/ AIDS on women and what steps should be taken to increase awareness and prevention.

The informative, entertaining, and inspirational programs featured a variety of speakers, including Antoine Oakley from Senator Biden's office and others who traveled from New York, under the sponsorship of Ortho Bio Pharmaceuticals.

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Two recent columns by Harry Thernal in the editorial section of the News Journal spoke out in support of establishing a nursery at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution, allowing incarcerated mothers to have the opportunity to keep their newborn babies.

Currently, in Delaware, babies born to incarcerated mothers are taken from their mothers two days after delivery. In whose interest is this being done? It's not in the child's interest, as research suggests that a child separated from its mother is more likely to become caught up in the juvenile and adult justice systems. And it is not in the community's interest as a mother who bonds early with her infant and keeps family ties is less likely to recidivate.

There are examples across the country that

show keeping babies with their incarcerated mothers can and should be done. For example, at two women's prisons in New York State, mothers keep their babies for up to 18 months in a nursery setting. Under strict supervision, trained staff helps them develop good parenting skills, receive substance abuse treatment, and prepare for life after release.

Here in Delaware, Superior Court Judge Susan Del Pesco has been the most visible and passionate advocate for the needs of babies born to incarcerated mothers. Along with Judge Del Pesco, the Delaware Center for Justice supports establishment of a nursery program for incarcerated mothers and their newborn children. What do you think?

Visit us with your thoughts on line: www.dcjustice.org

DCJ Welcomes Three New Case Managers

The Delaware Offender Reentry program, now in the second year of a three-year grant program, provides case management supportive services to offenders transitioning to New Castle County. To foster successful reentry, DCJ has three new case managers on board:

Avis C. Miner, who earned a bachelor's degree from Springfield College, has extensive experience working with delinquent youth, including working with the Delaware Division for Youth, Children and Their Families as a youth case worker.

Mary Starkweather-White brings more than 30 years of professional experience to DCJ. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College

and Wilmington College, with a master's degree in counseling. She chairs the Pardons Project, has worked as a paralegal, and has served as a social worker and a counselor.

Taliah I. Hull comes to DCJ with a broad background, having served as a Social Worker/Case Manager at Volunteers of America and Devereux Foundation, both in Pennsylvania. She earned a bachelor's degree from Temple University and has worked extensively with both youth and adult populations, focusing on helping clients develop parenting skills, placing children, and providing referrals to appropriate support services.

PEOPLE
AT
WORK

OPPORTUNITY
PLACE

OUR MISSION:

For 85 years, the Delaware Center for Justice has dedicated itself to building a safer, more secure Delaware through advocacy, education, research, and direct services that work toward restoring justice to all who are involved in and affected by Delaware's criminal justice system, including victims, offenders, their families, and the community.

Become a member of the Delaware Center for Justice and be counted among those who want to ensure justice in Delaware.

Senior Friend	\$20	Organizational Sponsor	\$100
Friend	\$35	Leader	\$250
Advocate	\$50	Patron	\$500+

Individuals and organizations are invited to join by choosing the membership level most appropriate for you, making your check payable to the Delaware Center for Justice and dropping it in the mail today. Your support is vital to building a safer, more secure Delaware for every citizen.

Mentoring Program Needs You

Guiding hands and supportive hearts are needed for one program.

- If you would like to volunteer for DCJ's newest Project REACH program and mentor children who have a parent incarcerated at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution, call Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Wilmington at 998-3577.

COMMENTARY

Published by the Delaware Center for Justice
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Bringing issues to light
 that will help improve
 Delaware's system of justice...