

Volunteer Spotlight: Shannon Streisel

Shannon has been an active volunteer with our Read In Read Out (RIRO) program for one year after learning about the program through a professor. Read In Read Out allows selected incarcerated parents to record themselves reading age-appropriate books to their children in order to preserve a bond while improving their communication and parenting skills. According to Shannon, volunteering with RIRO is most rewarding when she witnesses a change in the parent's mood while being in the program. Helping a parent and child maintain contact is a beautiful experience that requires a very small amount of effort on our part but has many benefits for those involved. She believes of the many challenges involved with being incarcerated or having a family member who is incarcerated, having meaningful contact between a parent and child should not be an additional burden—but made available to all those who desire it.

Shannon is a third-year graduate student at the University of Delaware pursuing a PhD in Criminology with a focus on addiction and substance use amongst justice involved individuals. In the future, Shannon would love to teach not only in a traditional university setting but also within prisons to ensure those who are released do not return and in fact, have a healthy and transition back into their communities.

Donor Spotlight: fit

Each year, Fit chooses an organization in which their clients are involved and sponsors a fundraising event to benefit a cause. This year fit sponsored a Guest Bartender Night at the Columbus Inn for DCJ! Fit's dedicated staff enjoyed serving all the wonderful folks who came out to support us. The evening was a great opportunity to catch up with some old friends and meet new ones.

Make a Donation

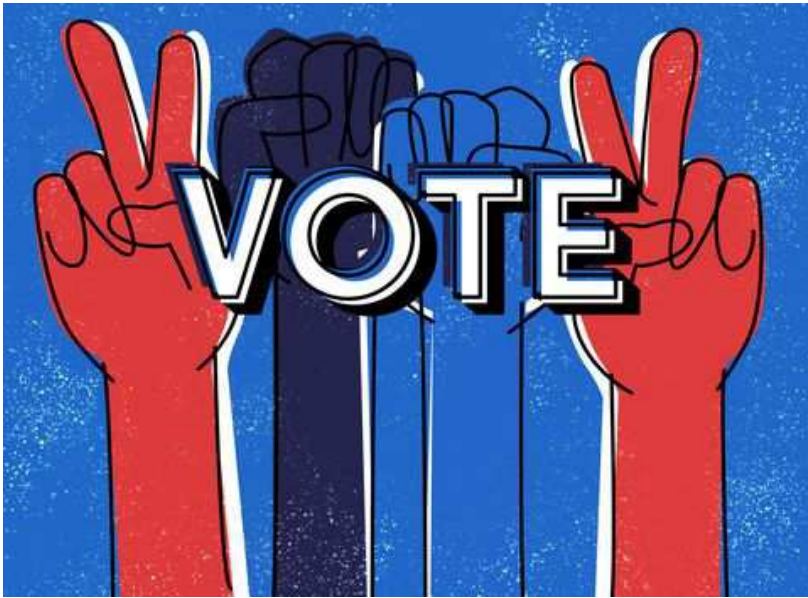
Please help us to continue to make a difference in Delaware by supporting our work with a donation. Checks can be made payable to Delaware Center for Justice, Inc. and mailed to 100 W 10th Street, Suite 905, Wilmington, DE 19801. Online donations can be made at www.dcjustice.org.

Thank you for your support!

The Delaware Center for Justice, Inc. is the leading non-profit organization in Delaware committed to transforming the quality of justice through advocacy, policy, and practice.

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Primary elections are less than a month away...

It's that time of the year again! Every election, whether it's a national, state, or local election, is important. The impact of voting touches nearly every facet of daily life, from safety, to housing, to education, and even our health. Primary elections are a month away, so it is critical to utilize this time to learn more about the candidates and their plans for Delaware. If possible, attend upcoming candidate forums, ask questions, and be engaged. Make your vote count this election year. Our future depends on it.

Delaware Election Dates

Primary Election- Thursday, September 6th

General Election- Tuesday, November 6th

For more information on Delaware Elections, please visit www.elections.delaware.gov

Legislative Update

On June 30th, 2018, the 149th General Assembly of our legislature came to a close. This session will be remembered for both its real successes in improving the quality of justice for youth and reducing disparities in sentencing and collateral consequences of conviction for adults and our true disappointment when our long anticipated pretrial reform package failed in the Senate.

First the good news –

Improving the quality of justice for youth

- a. HB 306 provided Superior Court with the discretion to return jurisdiction to Family Court to preside over allegations that a child possessed a firearm during the commission of a felony and raised the age for transfer from 15 to 16.
- b. HB 307 repealed and removed mandatory minimum sentences for children adjudicated delinquent in Family Court.
- c. HB 308 removed the sunset provision of statewide juvenile citation program.
- d. HB 339 prohibits placement of children in adult correctional facilities prior to adjudication or conviction and requires that detained children be placed in an appropriate secured detention facility for youth.
- e. HB 442 expanded the civil citation program to include additional misdemeanor offenses, providing a meaningful alternative to arrest for young people.
- f. SS 1 for SB 85 required schools to report rates of their use of out of school suspension as a disciplinary tool and compels those schools with high rates of out of school suspension or high rates of disparate rates of suspension to develop and implement a plan to reduce out of school suspensions and create more restorative practices.

Reducing sentencing disparities and mandatory minimums

- a. SB 203, a bill DCJ opposed which sought to increase mandatory minimum terms of confinement for weapons offenses for certain previously convicted offenders. This bill would have a dramatic impact on people of color. It failed to be released from committee.
- b. HB 361, a bill DCJ opposed which sought to expand the violent felony list to include Gang Participation. This statute is both vague in defining criminal street gang and in elucidating forbidden contact and triggered concerns that it would be used disproportionately against men of color residing in urban settings and have a chilling effect of one's exercise of their right to trial. This bill passed the House but failed in the Senate.

Reducing collateral consequences of conviction

HB 97: This bill, signed into law by the Governor, limits the impact of a person's criminal history on their eligibility for cosmetology licensure and authorizes the Department of Correction to develop an appropriate training program.

Reasons to continue advocating –

- a. HB 305 precluded the use of prior drug related adjudications from triggering enhanced sentencing of adults under our adult drug sentencing scheme. It passed the House but failed in the Senate.
- b. SB 221 proposed an amendment to the state constitution to expand the list of felonies for which a defendant could be held without bail. This bill required a super-majority and must pass in consecutive legislative assemblies before enactment. It failed in the Senate and is planned for reintroduction next session.
- c. SB 222 proposed enabling legislation that would provide the due process protections required to implement SB 221. Upon the failure of SB 221, no action was taken on this bill as it is moot without the amendment to the constitution.