

Belknap County Juvenile Justice Report

A publication of the
Belknap County Citizens Council on
Children and Families

www.bccj.org



A Bright Future for Ryan

"I guess I thought it was kind of cool and funny," says 17-year old Ryan, a strapping six-foot high school senior who on a lark with two of his buddies each stole a six-pack of a popular energy drink from a local supermarket. "I just slipped it under my jacket and walked out," he says.

But Ryan and his friends were caught on the store's surveillance cameras and were escorted back inside for questioning by the local police who arrived shortly thereafter. As this was Ryan's first offense he was referred by the police officer to the **Youth Services Bureau** Court Diversion Program.

"I thought they were all making such a big deal of this. The stuff was only worth \$6.95!" said Ryan. "But I met with Lisa-Marie at Youth Services Bureau and told her everything, including that my buddies and I drink and do pot on the weekends. So, she set up a meeting for me and my mom to talk with some other people about all of this."

Ryan's mother, a single mother who works full time at the hospital, went with Ryan to the meeting.

"I was sort of dreading it, because I thought they would blame me. I have to leave Ryan and his little sister Abby alone sometimes while I work and I always feel bad about this.

"I knew that Ryan was drinking with his friends, but the right time to talk with him about it just never happened."

The panel talked with Ryan and then designed a restorative contract that included community service and a class on drugs and alcohol. He completed all the requirements in the time given him.

"In fact," said his mother, "he liked some of the things so much that he went back for more!"

"Ryan is a different kid now. His grades have improved and his attitude has changed. He finished high school and now he's going to college in Boston. I'm so proud of him."

According to Ryan, "Even though I admitted

I stole the drinks and that it was a dumb thing to do, I was still bummed out at first that I had to do all this stuff. But I got used to it and kinda liked it.

"I helped some older ladies - as old as my grandmother - set up for their book sale at Gilmanton Old Home Day. I moved a ton of books for them. Then I worked a couple of times at the Friendly

Kitchen for the Salvation Army, fixing meals for people who are sort of homeless and don't have enough money to buy the right food.

"But one thing I really liked doing was parking cars for some big event over in Lakeport. It was freezing cold that night but we wore those orange vests and used Walkie-Talkies.

"I also learned a lot about shoplifting and how it affects so many people."

"Ryan did very well with his contract," says Lisa-Marie. "He checked in with me every week. He's a great kid. At first it was frustrating because he thought others should fix his problems. But, I got to know him pretty well during the five months we worked together and by the end of that time he started taking responsibility for his own actions.

"Ryan completed both the YES Shoplifting Program and the Challenge Course. He did more than 35 hours of community service and met some very friendly and helpful adults.

"Perhaps his biggest accomplishment," says Lisa-Marie, "was improving his grades in school enough to get into college where he can focus on his top interest, the music industry. He was able to turn his life around. I see a bright future for Ryan!"

Stories throughout this report are based on real situations that occurred in Belknap County during 2006. Names and some details have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

About This Report Card

- This report summarizes activity and outcomes in the juvenile justice system in Belknap County as framed by the principles of Restorative and Community Justice. It is based on 2006 data and builds upon the first report (2005 data) distributed in June of 2006.
- Both reports have been prepared and published by the **Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families** with the support and assistance of the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC) and other networks sponsored by the Citizens Council. *Editorial Board:* Andre Paquette, Alan Robichaud, Rich Moed; *Editor/Writer:* Judith Buswell; *Typesetting:* David Stamps, dbstamps consulting; *Consulting Group:* Halter, McDonald and Meyer
- Data for this report comes from a uniform Case Closing Form used by all four providers of services for juvenile offenders in Belknap County. The form was developed by JJAC members in collaboration with the NH Division of Juvenile Justice Services.
- Funding for this report comes from the Belknap County Citizens Council and a grant from the State Advisory Council of the NH Division of Juvenile Justice Services. (05JFFX)

About Belknap County

In 2005, the population of Belknap County was estimated to be 61,547 residents who live in ten towns and one city. Encompassing about 400 square miles - much of it as lakes, rivers, streams, and rolling hills - Belknap County's natural resources play a dominant role in sustaining the region's economic and cultural well-being.

Laconia, known as the "City on the Lakes", is the County Seat and represents a major portion of the county's economic and population base.



The county has three elected Commissioners (Executive Branch) who are part-time officials responsible for overall supervision, custody and care of all county departments, buildings and land, and budgetary oversight for all county expenditures. The county's 18 elected Representatives to the NH House of Representatives also serve as the County Convention (Legislative Branch) whose role is to approve the County budget. (www.belknapcounty.org)

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Helpful To Know

What is the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families?

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families was created in 2002 as a County Department.

- Its mission is to promote the principles of Community Justice throughout Belknap County so that children and families can live safely with dignity and respect.
- Volunteer citizens from each community in Belknap County are appointed as members of the Council by the County Commissioners.
- Council members work together in local, County, and statewide partnerships and committees of other citizens and professionals to reduce the numerous challenges facing children and families.
- Council work is accomplished through collaboration, networking, resource development, and advocacy.



What is Community Justice?

As illustrated by the Citizens Council logo, "Community Justice" is a philosophy that builds strong and united neighborhoods and communities. It is based on three principles:

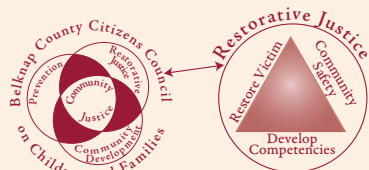
- Emphasizing the values of Balanced and Restorative Justice in the management of wrong-doings that occur,
- Acting early to prevent problems before they happen, and
- Focusing on the specific strengths and resources that are unique to each community.

These principles of Community Justice flourish best in an environment of collaboration, sharing, open dialogue and a coordinated exchange of information and ideas. This is why most all initiatives and activities of the Citizens Council are planned and carried out in partnerships with others. In some instances the Council leads and manages, while in others, the Council is a team member.

The Council reports its accomplishments and recommendations to the public through community forums, its website, the media, and this "Report Card to the Community".

What is Restorative Justice in Belknap County?

Restorative Justice is one of the three components of Community Justice. It is



a philosophy that also includes strength-based community development and a high priority on prevention. Community Justice is promoted by the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families.

Restorative Justice:

- Addresses the well being and restoration of the victim,
- Assures the safety of the community,
- Holds the offender accountable, and
- Develops competencies and life skills in the offender.

While there is a specific program in Belknap County called the Restorative Justice Program, all four programs and

Juvenile Justice System in Belknap County

Juvenile Offenders: Our Concern

A juvenile offender is a youth under the age of 17 who:

- Is truant from school, running away, or otherwise not following the reasonable rules of their parents) and/or
- Has committed an offense that if committed by an adult, would be considered a crime.

Juvenile offenders represent a very small portion of the population of Belknap County. Based on 2000 US Census Data, juvenile offenders in Belknap County are less than 1/2 of one percent of the general population and only 3.48% of youth under the age of 17.

Yet the concern for each of these juvenile offenders is significant because:

- These youth will grow to be adults and raise families of their own, probably in Belknap County.
- Without appropriate interventions, juvenile offenders are at risk of becoming adult criminal offenders. The cost of incarcerating adults is far more expensive than implementing restorative, community-based interventions with youth.

Graduated Sanctions

Belknap County has a system of graduated sanctions for juveniles. The very first step is a simple Counsel and Release implemented by local law enforcement. The middle three steps include Pre-Court Diversion, Court Diverted, and Court Involved programs. There are four providers of services for juvenile offenders in these three middle steps.

Pre-Court Diversion Pending the successful completion of personalized court diversion contracts, these juveniles can avoid a court appearance and a court record.

- **Youth Assistance Program** Located in Tilton, this private, non-profit agency provides court diversion services for first-time and younger offenders who live in Tilton and Sanbornton (Belknap County) and Northfield (Merrimack County). Other program offerings include informal counseling, parent support, crisis intervention, and substance abuse education for youth and their families.
- **Youth Services Bureau** Located in Laconia, this program provides court diversion for first-time and younger offenders who live in Belknap County. This agency also offers out-of school suspension, pre-C.H.I.N.S. intervention, family mediation, and substance abuse education for youth and their families in Belknap County.

Court Diverted The juvenile offender appears before a judge; however, if he/she completes a Restorative Justice contract all court records are deleted.

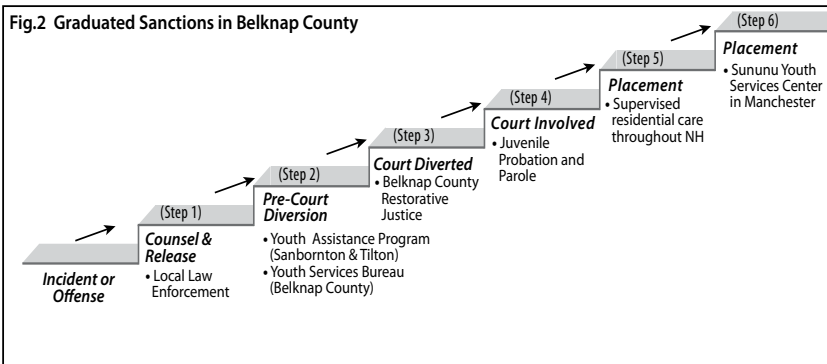
- **Belknap County Juvenile Restorative Justice Program** Located in Laconia, this County department was organized in 2002 to provide more intense and longer court diversion for second-time or older juvenile offenders who live in Belknap County.

Court Involved These juvenile offenders appear before a juvenile judge and are referred to Juvenile Probation and Parole for intense supervision and monitoring.

- **Juvenile Probation and Parole**, Laconia District Office, NH Division of Health and Human Services. This State program provides probation, parole, and tracking services for court-involved juvenile offenders in Belknap County. This program is the last step in the graduated sanctions that allows juvenile offenders to live at home. Juveniles who do not complete these court-ordered requirements are usually placed in supervised residential settings elsewhere in the state or at the Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester.

Each of these programs plays a significant role in the continuum of graduated sanctions for juvenile offenders. The entry point for juvenile offenders into this continuum depends on the age of the juvenile, the severity of the offense or incident, and whether this is a first-time offense. While there are always exceptions, this diagram explains the sanctions process as it works in Belknap County.

Fig.2 Graduated Sanctions in Belknap County



Worth Remembering...

- Each step in this ladder of sanctions increases the expectations and monitoring of the juvenile offender.
- Each step is necessary to insure that the widest number of juvenile offenders can be managed in the most appropriate and individualized manner as possible.
- Keeping and serving our youth in Belknap County, keeps them closer to family, school and community and aids in their successful return to positive citizenship.

services for juvenile offenders in Belknap County use principles of Restorative Justice to:

- Help the youth to understand the consequences of his/her offense on victims, their families, and their community,
- Help the youth to find ways to repair the harm caused by the offense, and
- Respect the individual value of youth and help them to develop their own unique strengths and skills.

The Belknap County Citizens Council and its numerous partners support the use of restorative justice as the preferred approach to dealing with juvenile crime.

Tracking & Monitoring Outcomes

Belknap County is the only county in New Hampshire to track the progress of its juvenile offenders through a uniform case closing form used by all four providers of juvenile justice services. When a juvenile case is closed in Belknap County, the managing provider completes this form, supplying information on the nature of the offense, drug testing outcomes, types of victim participation, number of community service hours, and educational status of the offender. This data allows tracking and comparison of key performance indicators and has become the substance of this Report Card to the Community.

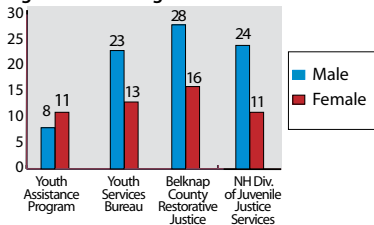
A grant from the State Advisory Group for the NH Division of Juvenile Justice Services to the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families has allowed the Council to hire the Halter, McDonald, and Meyer Consulting Group of Plymouth. They designed and trained providers in the use of this computerized case closing database.

A case is closed when the juvenile:

- Completes all the expectations of his/her contract and program, or
- Moves out of Belknap County, or
- Is referred to a different sanction level.

In 2006, the four providers closed 134 cases from their case load. Data from the Case Closing forms are included in this report.

Fig. 3 Case Closings: Provider & Gender



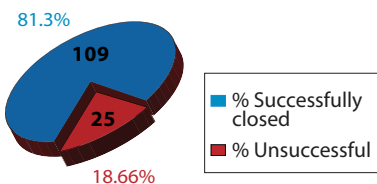
Worth Remembering...

- The supervision of juvenile offenders is shared among the four community-based providers.
- In three of the four programs, there are close to twice as many males as females.

Case Closings in 2006

Based on data from the 2006 Case Closing Forms completed by all four providers, 134 juvenile cases were closed in Belknap County. Of the 134 cases closed, 109 were closed successfully, meaning the juveniles completed all provisions in their personalized restorative contracts. In the 25 cases that were not successfully closed, 21 juveniles did not meet their restorative justice obligations and so were referred on for increased interventions and sanctions. The remaining four juveniles moved out of Belknap County.

Fig. 4 Closed Cases: Successful vs Unsuccessful



Worth Remembering...

- In 2006, 7% more cases were successfully closed than in 2005.

Principle Offenses

The 134 juvenile offenders committed 167 offenses as listed in the chart below.

Fig. 5 Offenses at Referral/Disposition

Simple assault	36
Destruction of Property/Vandalism	21
Theft	21
Drug Offense	18
Shoplifting	13
Tobacco Violation	8
CHINS	5
Criminal Threatening	5
Reckless Conduct	5
Resisting Arrest	5
Alcohol Offense	4
Criminal Trespass	4
Propelled/Motor Vehicle Offense	4
Burglary	2
Indecent Exposure/Lewdness	2
Receiving/Possessing Stolen Property	2
Acts prohibited	1
Carry/sell weapons	1
Conditional Release/Probation Violations	1
Disorderly Conduct	1
Disobeying an officer	1
False Public Alarm	1
Forgery	1
Fraudulent Use of Credit Card	1
Obstructing report of crime/ injury	1
Second Degree Assault	1
Sexual Assault	1
Truancy	1
Total	167*

* This number includes multiple offenses: 26 offenders had multiple charges (20 had 2 charges, 5 had 3 charges, 1 had 4 charges.)

Worth Remembering...

- According to the Case Closing data, more than 46% of the offenses committed by juvenile offenders are related to simple assault, vandalism, and theft.
- More than a third of these juvenile offenses involve violence or the potential for violence.
- A significant proportion of juvenile offenders commit more than one offense.

How to Reach Us

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Justin, One of Our Stars!

"My friend and I went out four-wheeling one day after school last fall," says 15 year-old Justin, tall and husky with long, dark hair in a ponytail. "It was getting a little dark and we were in a hurry so we took a short cut by riding down the main highway."

Justin, who has difficulty taking in a lot of information and efficiently making decisions is challenged in many settings, including school, but darting through the fields and woods on his off-road vehicle makes him feel powerful and in control of his somewhat confusing life.

Justin didn't see the police car that was parked in a turn-out alongside the highway. The policeman quickly drove up beside the boys and asked them to stop.

"I got scared," said Justin "and so I started going faster instead of stopping

"I got scared," said Justin, "and so I started going faster instead of stopping like I should have. When the cop pulled me over, I lost my temper and swore at him. I don't know why I did that, but I was really angry."

like I should have. When the cop pulled me over, I lost my temper and swore at him. I don't know why I did that, but I was really angry."

Justin who had no previous incidences was referred by the Tilton Police Department for Court Diversion at the **Youth Assistance Program** in Tilton.

Justin and his 11 year-old brother are being raised by their grandmother as their parents are divorced. Dad has been absent for most of Justin's life, spending time in and out of jail. Mom lives with them in their grandmother's house but according to Justin, "She is sick a lot and when she is not sick she's working over at the Outlets."

"Justin really didn't seem to understand that what he had done was dangerous. So his restorative contract included a lot of community service to help him begin to relate to others in his community," said Martha Douglass, who with Dawn Shimberg worked for a number of months with Justin.

"We encouraged him to help his elderly neighbor, Mr. French, a gentleman who lived alone in a big house near Justin," said Dawn.

"I started out by helping him clean up outside his house," shared Justin. "He was a little old to do much heavy work. So I piled up a lot of wood that was all around and raked his lawn. Then I helped him move a lot of furniture inside."

Justin began to realize that Mr. French was lonely and that he didn't eat very much.

"So I brought him stuff from our house, especially some bread and cookies that my grandmother made. One night we even sat together in his kitchen eating the cookies. He told me stories about his wife who had died several years before and then he showed me a medal he won in the war over in Korea a lot of years ago. I really liked talking with him and he told me that I made him feel better."

Justin also spent some time with the police officer who had stopped him. "I told him I was sorry. We were friends after that."

Says Dawn, "By the time Justin finished his contract, he really had changed. He understood what he had done. We talked a lot about how to take time when he makes a decision to be sure it's the right one. Justin started working harder at school so his grades improved. Even though he has finished his contract, he still comes by to see us. All in all, Justin is one of our stars!"

Restorative Justice Making A Difference ...

FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Acknowledging Their Mistakes

A juvenile offender is often a youth who has acted impulsively without regard for outcomes and consequences. Restorative Justice says that youth deserve a second chance, but only under certain conditions.

Juvenile offenders must:

- Accept responsibility for their mistakes,
- Understand the impact of the offense on their victims and begin solid efforts to restore some of the victims' losses,
- Understand, by participating in service projects and other activities, that their offenses affect the well being of their families and communities,
- Agree to finish high school and develop their own capabilities and strengths so that they can be contributing members of society, and
- Build an effective relationship with their adult supervisors.

Keeping Youth in Their Communities

It is usually preferable to manage juvenile offenders in their own communities where they can remain with their families and attend school without interruptions. One of the goals of community-based services is to identify resources and connections that will support the youth throughout the rehabilitative process.

Community-based Interventions are Cost Effective

It is much less expensive for taxpayers to maintain appropriate community-based services for juvenile offenders than to pay for residential placements outside Belknap County. While there are juveniles who require this level of supervision, many juvenile offenders can be effectively managed within their own communities.

Belknap County does send some juvenile offenders away from their homes to a variety of residential settings. One of these settings is the Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester, a secure residential facility where youth participate in a prescribed behavioral program that includes academics, residential life and group sessions. Residents at this statewide facility range in age from 13 to 17 years.

Worth Remembering...

- Placing a juvenile in a residential setting can cost as much as 14 times more than rehabilitating a juvenile within the community (see fig. 6 below).



Restorative Contracts

Each juvenile offender and his/her parents meet with a panel of adult volunteers who help the youth design a personalized contract based on the principles of Restorative Justice. The adult supervisor sees the youth on a regular basis, guiding him/her through this contract. Youth assigned to the Pre-Court Diversion sanction level usually take four to six months to complete their contracts. Youth assigned to the Court Diverted level spend a year on their contracts.

Juvenile offenders who are Court-Involved are supervised by a Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer (JPPO). These youths follow strict guidelines and expectations that include restorative justice principles, but may also include curfews, drug tests, and frequent and unannounced interactions with their JPPO. Court-ordered juvenile offenders are closely monitored for about a year by the JPPOs.

Sample Restorative Contract Youth Services Bureau

1. *John Smith* will complete 15 hours of community service through volunteer work with the LAYBL program.
2. *John Smith* will become involved in an extra help program at school, preferably through peer to peer tutoring.
3. *John Smith* will provide his caseworker with weekly progress reports.
4. *John Smith* will be responsible for restitution in the amount of \$35.00.
5. *John Smith* will write two letters of apology. One will be written to Olympia Sports and will include an explanation of what he has learned from this experience; the other will go to his parents and will include a plan to earn back their trust.
6. *John Smith* will complete the YES Shoplifting program. He will be responsible for the \$40 fee.
7. *John Smith* will speak with a Police Officer to learn what could have happened were he 17 or older.
8. *John Smith* will research the requirements of applying and being accepted to Duke and the University of Connecticut. He will share what he learned with his caseworker in the form of a paper (at least one page in length).
9. *John Smith* will keep a daily log, which he will share with his caseworker on a weekly basis.
10. *John Smith* will meet with his caseworker on a weekly basis.

Deadline: July 30, 2006

FOR VICTIMS

Addressing Victim Needs

Historically, across the country the needs of the victims have been overlooked. Instead, the emphasis has been on punishing offenders. However, this has changed over the past several years. Juvenile justice providers in the county with support from the Belknap County Citizens Council, have developed a more balanced and restorative approach to juvenile crime.

By the Citizens Council:

As part of this effort, the Citizens Council and JJAC meet monthly to share information and resources. During 2006, these two groups focused on victims. They

- Organized a grant-funded, countywide observance of National Crime Victims Rights Week in April 2006,
- Developed a Victims' Rights brochure that was distributed throughout Belknap County, and
- Organized a Victims' Rights and Awareness committee that focuses on victim issues.

By the Providers:

The four agencies, who manage juvenile offenders, are also concerned about victims. They

- Invite victims to participate in the Restorative Panels,
- Encourage victims to submit Impact Statements that are then acknowledged by the juvenile offenders, and
- Began developing Victim Empathy Awareness training opportunities for juvenile offenders.

By the Juvenile Offenders:

As part of restorative justice, juvenile offenders are asked to repair some of the harm they have caused their victims. Restorative Contracts may require juvenile offenders to:

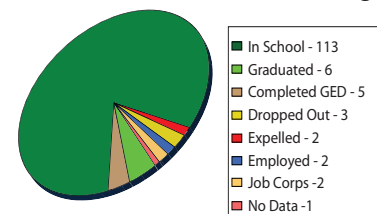
- Write and submit a letter of apology to the victim,
- Read and react to a victim impact statement,
- Participate in a mediated discussion with the victim,
- Perform community service,
- Assist in repairing property they have damaged,
- Make payments to the victim to cover financial losses, and
- Complete "victim empathy awareness" training.

Completing High School

Juvenile offenders are expected to continue their education. Youth who drop out of school are more likely to commit offenses and be targets for a number of other challenges, including a reduction in earning potential, substance abuse, domestic violence, and diminished capacity to parent their own children.

The Belknap County Citizens Council supports public and private educational institutions that make school as relevant and engaging to students as possible.

Fig. 7 Educational Status at Case Closing



Worth Remembering...

- At case closing, 92.5% of the juvenile offenders had graduated from high school, earned a GED, or were still in school continuing their education.

Fig. 6 Cost Comparison:

Belknap County Residential Placement & Community-Based Services

Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC)		Youth Services Bureau & Belknap County Restorative Justice Program	
• Per Diem Cost	\$366	• Projected combined budgets for both programs	\$439,611
• Average Number of Belknap County juveniles living at SYSC	11	• Average combined caseload for both providers	127 juveniles
• Average length of stay	135 days	• Cost per juvenile for 3-12 months of community-based, early intervention supervision	\$3,462.
• Annual cost for 1 juvenile at 135 days	\$49,410		
• Cost for 11 juveniles/135 days	\$543,510		

Restorative Justice Making A Difference ...

FOR VICTIMS

Involving Victims

Victims of juvenile crime are encouraged to participate in the restorative process. They are informed of their rights and updated on the progress of their cases.

Other strategies for involving victims include asking them to:

- Prepare a Victim Impact Statement so that the juvenile offender can understand the consequences of his/her offense,
- Participate in, or ask a representative to attend the Restorative Panel,
- Participate in a mediated discussion with the juvenile offender, and
- Complete a survey that measures their satisfaction with the process.

Victim participation in restorative panels is a key component in restorative justice and continues to be a challenge to implement. Many victims are reluctant to be involved, but those that do participate contribute much to the process.

Total Cases Closed in 2006	134
Number of cases with victims	103
Number of victims	125
Number of victims who submitted a Victim Impact Statement	27
Number of victims who participated in Victim/Offender Mediation	6
Number of Restorative Panels in which victims participated	17

Worth Remembering...

- Victims of crime are often traumatized and feel vulnerable. Many victims require support and encouragement to participate in restorative practices.
- Belknap County is building the capacity to meet the needs of victims of juvenile crime.

The Challenge of "Multiple Victims"

Juvenile crime often involves more than one victim per incident. According to the 2006 Case Closing data, 21.4% of the juvenile cases involved more than one victim. Addressing the needs of these "multiple victims" is one of the real challenges in implementing restorative justice principles.

Victimless Juvenile Crime

Another substantial portion of juvenile offenses are considered "victimless" crimes. These offenses include drug use and truancy from school.

Financial Restitution

Most Restorative Contracts require juvenile offenders to reimburse victims for their financial losses. However, frequently these payments cannot be made until the juvenile has earned some money. For this reason in 2006, JJAC members created a **Restitution Fund** that makes payments directly to victims. The Restorative Contract stipulates that money earned by the juvenile will replenish the Restitution Fund.

Worth Remembering...

- Juvenile Offenders in Belknap County are helping victims recover their financial losses.

About Mike

Sixteen-year old Mike broke into his elderly neighbor's home and stole money to pay for the drugs that he was using. As this was his first offense he was referred to the **Belknap County Restorative Justice Program**. Mike completed all the requirements of his 12-month contract, including 100 hours of community service.

All juveniles in the Restorative Justice Program are asked to write an *Empathy Statement* that summarizes the growth they have made from their year-long experience. This is the statement that Mike wrote. It is followed by his *Letter of Apology* to the victim.

Empathy Statement by Mike

"Belknap County Restorative Justice has been a strong learning experience for me. I committed a crime that I never thought I would be stupid enough to do. I am sorry for this, and have no other excuse for why I did it other than I needed the money to buy drugs.

Doing drugs was the first real big mistake I had ever made in my life. Smoking weed only made my life worse than it had been before I started doing them. It was so bad that I never realized what it was doing to me until I stopped. I used to smoke just about everyday, it made my grades drop lower than they had ever been, made me lazy, and it ruined my home life. It did this because the only thing my dad and I pretty much ever argued about was grades. I have smoked once since being in Restorative Justice, and even though I have had the urge to smoke quite a few times, I plan on staying drug free even though I will no longer be in this program.

Restorative Justice has turned my life around in more ways than just keeping me drug free. My dad and I had been really good friends before all of this happened. When I committed this crime, our friendship went downhill, we did not talk, we used to hang out, watch TV, play video games and race our remote control

Mike's Story

cars around, but that ended.

Since Restorative Justice has put me on the right track my dad and I have become closer again, and do not argue as much as we had. My mom was so disappointed in me that she literally stopped talking to me for a week; she wouldn't say a single word to me. I have since proved to her through Restorative Justice that I can be trusted again. Though she still has some doubts it has brought us closer, and made me more trustworthy.

My entire family was affected in some way or another, such as being ashamed, disappointed or embarrassed. Some of my friends lost respect for me, and people who heard about it, no further trusted me. I have changed my life around, and become a new and trusting person again.

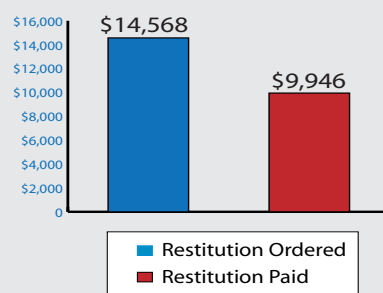
Restorative Justice has taught me that it is good to help people and the community. Doing things for people who can't, such as raking, shoveling, and moving furniture made me feel good, that I could do something to help people. No matter how much community service I do, it would never fully make up for what I did, but I hope that from helping as many people in the community as I did, it makes up for at-least a fraction of it." **Mike**

"Restorative Justice has taught me that it is good to help people and the community." **MIKE**

Mike's Letter of Apology

My biggest apology of course goes to Mr. ----- . No matter how much I apologize I know it will never make up for what I did. This has never happened to me, but I can imagine you can never recover from something like that. No matter how hard you try, it will be hard to trust people that you don't know from then on. I can't imagine feeling that way, and it makes me feel horrible that I was the cause of someone else having to go through that. Also with me being one of his neighbors, I'm sure added to the feeling of insecurity, and hurt. If there were anything that I could do to help, I would be the first person to jump at it. Though I'm sure it makes no difference, I hope that my completing the Restorative Justice Program shows Mr. ----- that I have learned from my mistakes and I am a changed person. I will never do something like this again. **Mike**

Fig. 9 Restitution to Victims in 2006



Full implementation of restorative justice principles throughout Belknap County - most specifically meeting the needs of victims - is a lengthy and complex process. It cannot happen overnight. However, as illustrated in this Report Card, Belknap County is making steady progress in recognizing that victims are a key ingredient in the restorative justice equation.

Community Connections

When a crime happens in a community, the residents are unsettled, anxious, and uneasy. They do not feel safe for a period of time and worry that this could happen again.

Restorative Justice principles extend beyond managing the juvenile offenders and assisting victims. These principles also develop the capacity of adults and organizations to prevent and control crime in their communities.

Juvenile offenders are often disconnected unknown, and unable to participate meaningfully in their communities. Restorative Justice strategies place juvenile offenders in structured and supervised activities where they can develop strong relationships with members of their communities. Youth who have strong community connections and who care about their neighborhoods are less likely to offend.

Building effective connections and relationship for youth requires conscious and steady effort. In our electronically managed culture where people can communicate without personal interactions with others, arranging for these connections for youth does not often occur naturally. Instead these opportunities for youth to participate in supervised employment, recreation, and community service activities must be carefully cultivated.

Justin began to realize that Mr. French was lonely and that he didn't eat very much.... "I really liked talking with him and he told me that I made him feel better", said Justin.

From Justin's Story, Youth Assistance Program

Community Service

Court diversion panelists try to match the juvenile's interests and potential with appropriate community service opportunities:

- A juvenile who expresses an interest in the culinary arts is asked to help out with community Soup Kitchens.
- A youth offender who has artistic talent is asked to create informational posters that can be shared with others.
- Teens who are interested in sports could be asked to help at a major triathlon event.

As most juvenile offenders lack meaningful relationships with adults, these community service activities also provide opportunities to interact with warm and caring adults.

"Ryan did more than 35 hours of community service and met some very friendly and helpful adults."

From Ryan's Story, Lisa-Marie Sposta, Youth Services Bureau

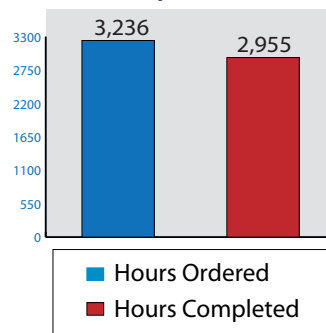


Supervised and structured community service experiences for juvenile offenders advance the principles of Restorative Justice, especially that of promoting community safety.

These experiences:

- Build relationships with community members,
- Assist with specific community needs,
- Strengthen the skills and competencies of juvenile offenders,
- Address community safety needs by providing adult supervision, and
- Value youths for the contributions they make.

Fig. 10 Community Service Completed vs Ordered



LANDSCAPING: Brian Loanes (R) from the Belknap County Juvenile Restorative Justice Program supervises a youth who helped with the maintenance of landscaping in downtown Laconia as part of his Community Service requirements.

Worth Remembering

- The percentage of completed versus ordered community work service hours has remained steady, and in fact, rose a bit from 90% in 2005 to 91% in 2006.

Juvenile offenders participated in meaningful community activity in more than 90 sites throughout Belknap County and beyond. These experiences develop skills and confidence in youth and help them understand the key ingredients of vibrant communities.

Fig. 11 A Sampling of the 2006 Community Service Work Sites

- Alton Central School
- American Red Cross
- Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families
- Belknap County Nursing Home
- Belknap Mall
- Belmont Parks & Recreation
- Bow Elementary School
- CareNet
- Elm Street School
- Gilford High School
- Good Shepard Lutheran Church
- Interlakes Elementary School
- Laconia Christian School
- Laconia Historical Society
- Laconia Library
- Laconia Police Department
- Lake City Cheer Gym
- Lakes Region Humane Society
- Meredith Department of Public Works
- New Beginnings
- NH Humane Society
- Operation Christmas
- Project EXTRA!
- Salvation Army
- Second Start
- The Fix-it Program
- The Teen Center
- Town of Barnstead
- Town of Tilton
- Youth Assistance Program
- Alton Marathon
- Baby Threads, Belmont
- Belknap County Conservation Trust
- Belknap County Restorative Justice
- Belmont High School
- Berlin Food Pantry
- BRATT
- Catholic Charities
- Fitness Edge
- Gilford Public Works
- Granite State Animal Shelter
- Interlakes High School
- Laconia City Hall
- Laconia Housing Authority
- Laconia Memorial Middle School
- Laconia Rotary Park
- Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce
- Lakes Region United Way
- Mooseman Triathlon
- New Hampton School
- NH JAG
- Ozanam Place
- Prospect Mountain High School
- Sandwich Community Library
- South Road Cemetery
- The Mayhew Program
- Timberman Triathlon
- Town of Gilmanton
- Toys for Tots
- Youth Services Bureau
- Alton Parks and Recreation
- Barnstead Elementary School
- Belknap County Convocation on Children and Families
- Belknap County Superior Court
- Belmont Mill
- Berlin Library
- Camp Harmony
- CoRe
- Gilford Elementary School
- Gilmanton Old Home Day
- Habitat Housing
- Laconia Area Community Land Trust
- Laconia High School
- Laconia Kiwanis
- Laconia Parks & Recreation
- Laconia Teen Center
- Lakes Region Child Care Centers
- Meredith Community Center
- National Crime Victims Rights Week
- NH Fish & Game
- NH Veterans Home
- Pemi-Baker Academy
- S.A.D.D.
- Sargent Park
- Special Olympics
- The Museum to You Program (Belmont)
- Town of Alton
- Town of Sandwich
- WLNH Children's Auction

Restorative Justice: Citizens at the Center

How Can Volunteers Help Out?

Restorative Justice principles are not effective unless citizens are actively helping juvenile offenders become productive members of society.

Volunteers help by:

- Participating on Court Diversion Panels to discuss the specific incident with the youth and then design an appropriate Restorative Justice Contract (*Brief training and orientation is offered.*),
- Supervising and assisting with community service activities,
- Communicating with victims of juvenile crime (*Training and orientation is offered.*),
- Assisting and participating with any of the youth development organizations in the county, and
- Understanding the principles of Restorative Justice as outlined in this report and sharing this information with neighbors, family, and friends.

While professionals and specialists can develop many promising programs for children and families, it is the volunteer citizens that bring these efforts to life.



"What happens when a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens come together to improve their community for children and families? Great things!"
 --Sarah Fox of Sanbornton,
 Chair of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families



COURT DIVERSION PANEL: Youth Services Volunteers Deb LaFlam (Far L) and Jeff Noyes talk with a juvenile offender to help her create her restorative contract. Lisa-Marie Sposta, Case Manager, (2nd from R) facilitates the process.



Volunteer with the Belknap County Citizens Council

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families is an innovative County Department with citizen members representing the communities in Belknap County. This group of volunteers meets monthly and is at the center of every conversation around children and families in Belknap County.

Membership applications are available at www.bccj.org

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers also make a profound difference for youth in Belknap County. There are numerous opportunities with youth development organizations in every corner of Belknap County. These organizations promote positive aspects in every youth, thus helping to keep them out of the juvenile justice system. Three examples follow:

- **Belknap County 4-H Program** The mission of 4-H is to help youth acquire knowledge, develop life skills and form attitudes to enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. 4-H emphasizes the importance of involving youth in the learning process. It is offered free of charge to youth ages 5-18 from all cultural and economic backgrounds. Members and volunteers live in towns, cities, farms, and suburbs. extension.unh.edu
- **Belknap County CoRe Coalition** The Belknap County CoRe Coalition develops and supports substance abuse prevention education initiatives with youth, families, and the community. Their goal is to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by promoting positive behaviors in Belknap County youth. www.interlakes.org/Core
- **Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region** (formerly The Teen Center) The Boys & Girls Club of the Lakes Region, located in Laconia, encourages the positive development and enhances the quality of life for the youth of the greater Lakes Region area. By providing service based on principles of behavioral guidance, and by offering instruction and guidance in social, educational, vocational, character, athletic and leadership disciplines, the Boys & Girls Club is a safe, welcoming and positive environment for all youth. The club is open daily during the school year, school vacations and no-school days. www.bgclr.org

Photo Captions

1. Mike Baron (L) of Baron's Billiards congratulates youth at the Boys and Girls Club of the Lakes Region.
2. Cooking a spaghetti supper are Boys and Girls Club volunteers: Pat Santillo of Meredith (far L) and Leo Sanfacon (2nd from R). Helping out are staff member, Jen Maynard (2nd from L) and teen Angie Joyce of Laconia.
3. Inter-Lakes art teacher (Meredith) volunteers her time to paint the faces of youth at a CoRe activity.
4. Officer Ben Black of the Laconia Police Department (2nd row, far R) hiked up Mt Major in Alton with a group of teens from the Boys and Girls Club.
5. CoRe volunteers cook hamburgers and hot-dogs for a CoRe activity in Meredith.
6. Adults and youth from CoRe and the Boys and Girls Club participate in a Community Mapping project in Belknap County.
7. Volunteer Rick MacDuff leads a woodworking exploration activity as part of a 4-H afterschool program in Alton.
8. Jeanita Alfonso, a volunteer 4-H in Alton, shows Amanda Viscariello (R) how to knit.

What We Believe

André Paquette

Community Restorative Justice for juveniles reflects how much we value our children and youth; for if we truly value them, we want each and every one of them to succeed in life.

Young people make mistakes: mistakes of judgment, mistakes in action, and mistakes about values. Thinking adults know this and they want more than punishment for juveniles when these mistakes rise to the level of offenses against others and the community; thinking adults want to help these young offenders to recognize their mistakes, make amends for their behavior, and help them to become productive members of society.

Thinking adults who have the time and talent to “give back” to society can participate in community restorative juvenile justice. They can serve on panels to help youthful offenders and their victims reconcile; they can help offenders to make amends through restitution to victims and service to their community, and, they can serve on the Citizens Council and its work groups to help eliminate the causes of juvenile delinquency.

André Paquette, who lives in Laconia is Chair of the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Advisory Council. He is a retired school superintendent.

“Thinking adults who have the time and talent to ‘give back’ to society can participate in community restorative juvenile justice.”

—André Paquette

Belknap County is one of a handful of places in the country that measures and reports outcomes on national performance measures in juvenile justice. We wish to thank the American Prosecutors Research Institute for the invitation to attend their 2005 Balanced and Restorative Justice Institute which served to launch this initiative in Belknap County.

“I am constantly impressed by the numerous projects and activities that the Citizen Council members are involved in outside of the Council - efforts which tie closely with the Council’s mission.”

—Sarah Fox of Sanbornton



(L-R) André Paquette, Sarah Fox, and Alan Robichaud

Sarah Fox

In 2001, when 25 Belknap citizens were brought together with a common concern about what was happening to the youth in the juvenile justice system, little did they know that they were laying the foundation for many new, and positive changes in the lives of young people. The Citizens Council’s strength and uniqueness is based on the composition of its members, everyday citizens who come from all walks of life who share a commitment to the children and families in our community.

I am constantly impressed by the numerous projects and activities that the Citizen Council members are involved in outside of the Council - efforts which tie closely with the Council’s mission. We have members who are part of the Friends Program, who advocate for refugees and their children, who teach prisoners how to stay connected with their families on the outside, and who have started a parent support group to be a place for parents to turn when they need help. There are also members who focus more closely on the juvenile justice issues who meet regularly with the juvenile service stakeholders. They write reports for the community about the status of juvenile justice programs, serve on Restorative Justice Panels, and work to address the rights and needs of the victims. The list goes on, as does the evolution of the Council. Each member brings a different expertise and perspective. Together they are changing the way the community views and values children and families.

Sarah Fox, Esq. is the Court Improvement Project’s Training Specialist with the Office of the Administrative Judge for the NH Family and District Courts. Sarah is from Sanbornton and is Chair of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families.

Alan Robichaud

It was Ben Franklin who said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

With this quote in mind, I enthusiastically accepted this job as Executive Director of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families in January of 2002. Thanks to the wisdom of the Belknap County Commissioners we have had an opportunity to begin doing things differently for kids and families in Belknap County.

An immediate goal was to understand the juvenile justice system in Belknap County. We organized the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC), a network of agencies and organizations and citizens intensely focused on finding “local solutions for local problems”. JJAC is now one of the first and most effective Council-related networks. When I see how this JJAC group, led by retired school superintendent André Paquette, so effectively works together, examining problems and identifying solutions, I think Mr. Franklin must be smiling!

Promoting the principles of Community Justice is accomplished by working hand-in-hand with networks like JJAC. The Citizens Council is engaged with many local, county, state, and even national partners who intentionally come together to find new solutions for problems that face children and families. This means that we are not doing the same things over and over again and so we can expect different results. One and one can equal three!

Working collaboratively with numerous partners in Belknap County and the State is not a short-term process. It will take time to nurture

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—Alan Robichaud

trusting relationships among multiple partners and to secure resources together that no one agency could muster on their own.

However, we are getting there, step by step. Stories like those of Ryan, Mike, and Justin and other youths tell us that we are on the right path.

Alan Robichaud is Executive Director of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families.