



2012 Annual Report

Buffalo / Pepin Teen Court Coordinators

In April 2012, Marie Ritscher, Pepin County 4-H Youth Development Agent, and Annie Lisowski, Buffalo County 4-H Youth Development Educator, accepted leadership for the Buffalo/ Pepin Teen Court. Ritscher and Lisowski's short term goals were to increase program awareness throughout the community and to improve program effectiveness for youth panelists, teen offenders, schools and referring agencies.

Restorative Justice in Buffalo and Pepin Counties

Restorative justice involves three groups: victims, offenders and communities. Restorative justice is a structure to create a relationship between the offender and the victims related to the offense. Through this process the offender is encouraged to recognize the human relationship they have to the victims and their impact their actions had on everyone involved. Traditional courts usually focus on establishing guilt and determining a sentence that fits the crime. A youth court process informed by restorative justice considers what is broken between people, and therefore it seeks an outcome that is more reparative than punitive. Therefore, teen offenders are given an opportunity for a real second chance to prove that mistakes can be turned into positive choices.

Teen Court Youth Panelists

Dana Erickson, a Americorps VISTA Summer Associate for UW-Extension, revamped the existing youth panelist handbooks to ensure better juror education and understanding prior to a case. UW-Extension also trained thirteen new youth panelists in August and October of 2012 who are mentored by twenty-five experienced teen court youth jurors.



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Panelist training, instructed in part by Judge Duvall, focused on the principles of restorative justice and developing strategies for developing meaningful sanctions for teen offenders.

Meaningful Sanctions for Teen Offenders

Teen Court Coordinators worked with Teen Court Advisory Board members to establish new guidelines to allow youth jurors to better match individual sanctions to teen offender needs thereby increasing the positive impact of restorative justice for offender, victim and community.

Service-Learning and Teen Court

UW-Extension also worked with many local business, agencies and organizations to establish pre-approved service-learning sites for teen offenders who are required to perform community service as part of their sanction. Now teen offenders can select from pre-approved sites where an adult volunteer has been trained in the restorative justice, resiliency and youth protection. This model aims to improve experiences for both the offender and the community.

New Direct Referral Method

A new direct referral set to launch in early 2013 will increase the likelihood that youth can be served through teen court for offenses that happen at school and the community by limiting the administrative procedures for referring agencies. Direct Referral will allow more youth to benefit from Teen Court without potential circuit court appearance.

Reaching Out to the Community

In order to achieve the goal to increase communication with the community, Teen Court Coordinators Lisowski and Ritscher developed a logo and brochure, formulated an educational presentation for students on issues surrounding restorative justice, and created a webpage for the program at <http://buffalo.uwex.edu/teencourt>. A next step is to edit and market the informational video script that youth panelists wrote and taped in the summer of 2012.

Buffalo / Pepin County Teen Court Advisory Board

Teen Court Board members provide policy direction, support, and advocacy for the restorative justice program. Representatives from each of the following agencies meet bi-annually as a large group to develop, implement and evaluation the program: Alma, Gilmanton, Mondovi, Cochrane-Fountain City, Durand and Pepin School Districts, Buffalo & Pepin County Human Services, Sheriff's Departments, UW-Extension Offices, and Circuit Court, and local Police Departments.

Thank You!

Thank you to 2012 funders. The financial support of these businesses and organizations make Buffalo/Pepin Teen Court programming possible: Komro Sales and Service, Bauer Built, Pepin County, Riverland Communication, Inc., Jerry Thompson Agency, Inc., Bauer's Auto Service, Heike Realty, RBO Business Services, Inc., Security Financial Bank, Chippewa Valley Dental, Bautch Insurance Agency, Marten Transport, Mayo Clinic Health System-Lake City, Riverland Energy, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Pepin Area Community Club, Pepin Lions Club, Alma Vet Clinic, Pepin County Human Services, Mondovi High School, Fountain City Lions Club, Richardson Electric, Nelson Telephone Cooperative, Badgerland Financial, Durand Lions Club, Durand Legion, Alma Legion, Nelson Lions Club, Animal Wellness Center of Buffalo Valley.

