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Message From Court Coordinator Bill Babcock



As stated in a previous message, Philadelphia Community Court began as a pilot project and its operational plan, adopted by all of the participating agencies in the July 2001 Memorandum of Understanding creating the Court, is titled "Demonstration Community Court". The idea was to get the Court up and running and then bring in an outside evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the operation.

The need for evaluation was written into the operational plan, which states: "The Community Court requires careful evaluation to document its effectiveness, its evolution, and its applicability to other Philadelphia neighborhoods." The plan then lists a series of outcomes to measure that effectiveness. Even without that language, it would be strongly advisable to have an outside evaluation. Such objective reports are critical to acquiring and maintaining funding for new projects, as well as providing insight on how to improve existing services.

However, agreeing to an evaluation and getting one done have proved to be two very distinct concepts. The biggest obstacle has been funding. There are several very qualified individuals and organizations capable of performing such an evaluation, but the cost is steep and we have spent a number of years trying to obtain government or foundation grants to subsidize it.

A couple of years ago, the Treatment Research Institute (TRI) obtained a small grant to begin the work, but TRI was not able to acquire the remaining funds to complete the evaluation. Subsequent proposals by other evaluators to both the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the latter twice, were **rejected**.

In view of the fact that PCCD had provided almost \$350,000 in grants for other aspects of the Court's operation, and the fact that this is the only community court in Pennsylvania, we assumed that PCCD would want to know whether its money had been well spent and whether the concept was

exportable to other parts of the Commonwealth. PCCD agreed and issued a funding announcement for evaluations that specifically included Philadelphia Community Court as one of the funding categories.

PCCD received two proposals and, based on the recommendation of the review committee, the full Commission awarded the grant to the National Center for State Courts on December 12. The work could begin as early as January. We very much look forward to working with the Center on the long-awaited evaluation.

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Personnel Profile: Clinical Coordinator Madelin Torres



A full 70% of Community Court defendants have drug or alcohol problems and it falls to Madelin Torres and her staff to make sure that those who are willing get the appropriate level of care.

In three years at the Court, first as a case manager and now as clinical coordinator supervising the unit that does evaluations and case management for clients needing treatment, Maddy, as she is known, has her technique down for encouraging the reticent to accept help: "No one wants to go to treatment. My motto is 'kill 'em with kindness'."

She cites as an example a once-hostile and guarded client who she cajoled with support, help with time management and even the offer of a holiday gift basket for the client and her children to get her to accept and attend treatment sessions. "We have to give them a supportive network," Maddy says. "It's very important that they feel supported."

After an initial intake, new defendants who appear to have addictions are referred to Maddy and her staff of three for evaluation and voluntary placement in out- or inpatient treatment programs. The staff identifies appropriate treatment, makes all necessary arrangements, including insurance and paperwork, and follows up extensively with each client.

A native of North Philadelphia and a graduate of LaSalle University with a degree in psychology, Maddy is engaged to be married in the spring. But for now, the winter is an especially busy time because many homeless individuals want to get into treatment as a way out of the cold, she says. "And in this courtroom, it's all about the client - helping people out."

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Client Profile: Roddy D. Eason



Clutching the bible that he carries everywhere, Roddy D. Eason is frank about the impact Community Court has had on his life: "If I didn't go for this, I'd probably be laying dead somewhere."

Roddy was homeless, out of work and with a long history of drug addiction when he was arrested for buying drugs. It was his first arrest and a cry for help. "I was trying to get picked up," he said.

At Community Court, caseworker Joel Grey helped him get 28 days of much-needed inpatient drug treatment, "a chance to detox and a chance to learn about myself." Determined to avoid temptation, Roddy took a cab from the hospital directly to Always Have a Dream, the recovery house where he continues to live. He also recently completed eight further months of outpatient drug treatment.

Having just turned 45, Roddy is once again actively involved in the church and hopes to draw on 20 years of experience in security to find a job. "My

plan is to get back into the workforce, get a job, buy a house and hopefully have a family," he says. "This place for me was my last chance. I refused not to take advantage of it."

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Sprucing Up the Court, Inside and Out



The lobby at Community Court



Community Court window display

After four years of heavy use, the Community Court space at 1401 Arch Street was in need of a little facelift.

With overhead budget funds from the City of Philadelphia, the Court replaced the well-worn carpeting in the reception area.

Supervised by Jerry Phillip, three clients performed their community service sentences by repainting the two conference rooms. In his free time, Police Officer Dave Petroski procured another church pew for the courtroom gallery area and restored it for use. Dave has also repaired a number of other courtroom benches that have broken over the years. Court staff also bring seasonal cheer with holiday decorations.

Outside, at the suggestion of Jerry Phillip and with help from Unlimited Dimensions and the Center City District, the Court is the subject of a handsome new window display on Arch Street that advertises the Court's presence in the building and explains its programs and mission.

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Philadelphia as a Model for Community Courts

The Philadelphia Community Court has become a resource for other jurisdictions considering their own problem-solving courts. In the last issue of the newsletter, we reported on a visit by members of Ireland's National Crime Council.

More recently, 10 judges and four staff members from California's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Collaborative Justice Committee

representing six different counties visited the Court to tour the facility, observe operations and meet with staff. The group also visited the Midtown and Red Hook community courts in New York.

Julius Lang of Center for Court Innovation facilitated the fact-gathering mission.

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U.K. Launching 10 New Community Courts, Based on U.S. Model

In November, the British government announced its plan to launch a series of community courts across England and Wales. [Click here](#) to read more.

According to the Center for Court Innovation, the 10 new U.K. courts, which build on the model of the Red Hook Community Justice Center in New York, represent a significant investment in rethinking the relationship between courts and the community. In making the announcement, the Lord Chancellor said, "I believe that community justice is an essential part of the future of the criminal justice system."

The Center for Court Innovation promotes court reform internationally, testing new ideas in the courts of New York City. Its latest experiment, Bronx Community Solutions, is an effort to spread the concept of community justice throughout a busy urban criminal courthouse. You can check on their progress by visiting their blog, ["Changing the Court."](#)

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Philadelphia Community Court by the Numbers

Since Opening Day (Feb. 25, 2002) – September 30, 2006	
Total # New Cases Heard:	33,022
● Summary Offenses	27,218
● Misdemeanors	5,804
Total Individuals Needing & Receiving Court Social Services:	
● Drug/Alcohol Assessments	1,391
● Clients Attending Treatment Behavioral & Anger Management Classes	8,095
● Clients Completing Court Mandated Treatment	1,574
● Clients Completing Long-Term Treatment	410
● Clients Seen by Court Nurse	2,183
Hours of Community Service Performed	246,872
Value of Community Service Performed	\$ 1,271,390

(Based on a Minimum Wage of \$5.15/Hour)	
Fines & Costs Collected	\$ 1,223,475
Restitution Collected	\$ 24,008

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If you have comments, corrections, or suggestions for future editions, please contact Elise Vider at evider@centercityphila.org.

The Philadelphia Community Court combines criminal justice and social service agencies in a comprehensive response to quality-of-life crimes that emphasizes community service and behavioral treatment programs, rather than jail time, for low-level offenses. The Philadelphia Community Court is a partnership of the City of Philadelphia, First Judicial District, District Attorney, Defender Association, Police Department, the City Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs and the Center City District.

