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*New Holly P-Patch Service Site
- Photo by Stephanie Tschida*

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Seattle Community Court News

Seattle Community Court Hosts Visitors from the Center for Court Innovation

By Bob Hood

Seattle Community Court hosted a two day site visit for a team from the Center for Court Innovation on August 12th and 13th. Julius Lang and Brett Taylor, CCI's Director and Deputy Director of Technical Assistance, were in town to take a look at our court's operations as part of it being designated by the United States Department of Justice as one of only three national Community Court Mentor Sites. The Court was selected in March of 2009 along with the community courts in Hartford, CN and Dallas, TX. The three courts were picked as exemplary programs, well equipped to teach others on how to create and improve their own community court programs.

As part of their visit, the CCI team observed court sessions and a defendant program orientation session; visited the Lake City community service site; attended a Community Court Steering Committee meeting; toured the Court Resources Center; and met with City Council Member Tim Burgess and other key program staff and community representatives. They also presented a United States Department of Justice plaque commemorating the award to Seattle Community Court Executive Committee Members Judge Fred Bonner, City Attorney Tom Carr, and ACA Director Don Madsen.

Lang and Taylor were particularly impressed with how the spirit of volunteerism permeates the Seattle Community Court project. "I can't imagine how our trip could have been any more informative or inspiring" Lang said.



CCI's Julius Lang (right) presents the Mentor Court Award to Judge Fred Bonner, City Attorney Tom Carr, and ACA Director Don Madsen (left to right)

The Seattle Community Court team expects a growing stream of visitors and requests for technical assistance in the future as part of its mentor court role. The USDOJ is in the process of awarding American Recovery Act stimulus grants and a whole funding category of the Act is committed to helping jurisdictions start or improve problem solving courts.

Community Court Helps Drug Market Initiative Reach Important Milestone

By Ruth Bowman

The Seattle Drug Market Initiative, an approach designed to break up overt illegal drug dealing in our residential neighborhoods, reached an important milestone on August 6th with its first community "call-in" of low-level drug dealers in the East Precinct's 23rd Avenue corridor. The initiative, the result of a United States Department of Justice technical assistance and training grant Seattle received in September of 2008, got there with critical help from the Seattle Community Court. Judge Fred Bonner, who helped co-found and currently presides over Seattle Community Court, played a unique role

in this alternatives-to-incarceration effort, serving as the Seattle DMI Core Team’s social services representative.

The grant successfully pursued by City Attorney Tom Carr and former Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske provided federal funding to train a core team on techniques first developed and implemented in High Point, North Carolina. During the course of three intensive training sessions, the core team visited High Point, Milwaukee, and Nashville, learned about the details of the approach, and gained insights on how to successfully implement the initiative. The Department of Justice has trained over twenty jurisdictions nationwide in the techniques over the past two years. The Seattle team hopes to replicate the successful results obtained in High Point and other cities.

In addition to Judge Bonner, the Seattle Core Team also included East Precinct Police Commander Paul McDonagh, Assistant City Attorney and East Precinct Liaison Tienney Milnor, Seattle Neighborhood Group Director Kay Godefroy, and Bob Hood, Chief of the Seattle City Attorney’s Office Public & Community Safety Division, as the team’s point of contact and lead coordinator.

Judge Bonner’s familiarity with the Court Resources Center, defendant needs assessments, and the community court’s experience with referring defendants to social services, was instrumental in helping to build the strong social services network critical to the High Point model. The Seattle team also used the same social services needs assessment form that is being used in Community Court to screen defendant needs under the Seattle DMI.

City Attorney Tom Carr said that the Seattle Drug Market Initiative “represents an important partnership between a community affected by an open-air drug market and the criminal justice system. They actively work together towards a common goal of ending the harmful impacts of drug dealing on the neighborhood.”

To learn more about the Seattle DMI, see the front page Seattle Times article on the “call-in” at:

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/ocalnews/2009619108_webdrugdealers07m.html .

Lake City Chamber of Commerce Honored at Summer CAB Meeting

By Bob Hood

On Friday, June 28th, Chuck Dickey, and the Lake City Chamber of Commerce, were recognized with a Community Partnership Award at the Summer Meeting of the Seattle Community Court Citizen Advisory Board. The award, presented by Seattle Community Court Executive Committee member Tom Carr, Seattle’s City Attorney, followed remarks by Ed McKenna, the City Attorney’s Office North Precinct Liaison Attorney.



City Attorney Tom Carr (left) presents Chuck Dickey with a Community Partnership Award as Precinct Liaison Ed McKenna looks on.

Ed was a perfect choice to make the award remarks as he hails from the Lake City neighborhood and has known Chuck for nearly 40 years. Ed noted how Chuck and his wife had resided in Lake City in the same house for better than fifty years, and that Chuck has been a neighborhood activist and volunteer for most of those years, particularly since he “retired”. Most recently, Ed was familiar with Chuck because of his involvement in the North Precinct Advisory Council. Stephanie Tschida, the Community Service Site Manager for the City Attorney’s Office,

went out to the North Precinct Advisory Council with Ed earlier this year to describe the community court program to the Council and build support for more community service sites in the north end of Seattle. Ed noted humorously how Chuck was initially a bit skeptical, wondering out loud why it was a “good idea to *bring criminals to* Lake City instead of trying to keep criminals away.” But it didn’t take long to convince Chuck that community service by Seattle Community Court defendants was a good thing for the neighborhood, a good thing for its residents, and a good thing for defendants.

Chuck then spearheaded the effort to bring the new community service site into being. “Chuck stepped up and helped to make it happen and we couldn’t have done it without him”, notes Stephanie. “He helped convince fellow members of the Chamber to support the effort, including making sure the defendant work crews had a local staging area, restrooms, water, and service projects that would help restore and beautify the neighborhood.

Now, roughly three days per month, community court crews head up to Lake City to perform a variety of tasks designed to improve the neighborhood long plagued by low-level offending. They stage for a morning orientation at a conference room offered by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. From there, they fan out to various service sites to complete their court-ordered community service obligations.

Community service teams have cleaned up litter and debris along Lake City Boulevard, done blackberry removal and other environmental restoration, and worked on other projects identified by Lake City community members. They are currently involved in a project to create a community art mural. Chuck regularly participates in these efforts, helping AmeriCorps team members to provide support and encouragement to these offenders as he works along side of them to improve the livability of Lake City.

In his remarks to the Citizen Advisory Board, the ever humble Chuck offered his thanks for the recognition, but was quick to point out the great work that the AmeriCorps team does to support defendants in their cleanup efforts.



Seattle Community Court defendants complete community service in Lake City.

Lake City is the latest neighborhood to be recognized with a Community Partnership Award. Previous winners of the award include the Belltown neighborhood, the Beacon Alliance of Neighbors, the Colman Neighborhood Group, and the Metropolitan Improvement District. At each meeting of the Citizen Advisory Board we try to recognize one of our outstanding neighborhood partners. Seattle Community Court could not be a success without the help of these great community partners.

Judge Fred Bonner Rejoins Seattle Community Court

By Bob Hood

In June of this year Judge Fred Bonner retook the reigns of Seattle Community Court as its presiding judge after having been away from that role for more than two years. Judge Bonner was happy to be returning to the groundbreaking, problem-solving court that he helped launch 2005.

“I enjoyed my work in Seattle Municipal Court’s Domestic Violence Court calendars”, he said, but “because of my involvement with the creation of this Court, it is great to be back hearing cases on this calendar on a regular basis.” Judge Bonner hears community court cases Tuesday through Thursday during the afternoon.

Judge Bonner has returned to a court that has significantly changed from the last time he regularly presided there. “We started this court on a shoestring” Judge Bonner noted, “with everyone on the team donating time to make this court happen.” Originally, the City Attorney Tom Carr, former ACA Director Dave Chapman, and Judge Bonner himself, took time from their regular duties to provide the coverage necessary to make the court possible. Defendants were managed with help of a single probation officer and they did community service at only a couple of downtown community service sites.

Photo by Kendi Rossi of Hartford Community Court



Judge Bonner presides over the Community Court Calendar.

“Now the Court has regularly assigned attorneys from the involved agencies, two probation monitors, numerous volunteers, and a large AmeriCorps Team that helps to monitor and encourage defendant completion of community service at sites located all over the city.” Bonner noted. It also sees more than four times as many defendants as the court saw during its pilot phase when Judge Bonner last regularly presided there.

“It’s a far different place from where we were back in 2005”, Judge Bonner said, “It’s much busier, better staffed, and a much more matured institution than it was when I was here the last time.” But he also notes that the court faces significant new challenges and a budget environment that is very difficult. Judge Bonner says that he is looking forward to the opportunity to help move the court forward to meet these challenges as it enters a new era as a national community court mentor site.

Judge Ron Mamiya Leaves Behind a Stronger Seattle Community Court

By Seattle Community Team

Like most things in life, change is inevitable and the true test of the institutionalization of a new idea is its ability to withstand change and the test of time. When Judge Ron Mamiya took over the helm of Seattle Community Court in 2006 from Judge Bonner, the court faced such a challenge.

The court had completed its pilot phase and was still in its relative infancy. The community court team was just starting to implement a major grant from the United States Department of Justice that would markedly change the nature, scope, and complexity of Seattle’s Community Court effort and add a community service requirement and needs assessment process to pretrial diversion candidates.

Judge Mamiya helped guide the court through this period of expansion as the judicial representative on the Seattle Community Court Steering Committee. His leadership was instrumental in helping to integrate new staff and resources into the court and helping to incorporate many new community service sites. His initiation of “graduation ceremonies” for successful program completers, capped with a photo, a handshake, and a “gavel” pencil, provided positive reinforcement to hundreds of Community Court defendants that appeared before him.



Judge Mamiya pictured with a successful Community Court graduate.

His willingness to engage defendants about their Community Court experience upon “graduation” helped us learn new insights on how the court’s programs were impacting defendants.

A worthy goal of any judge who presides over a problem solving court is to leave behind a court that is stronger and better equipped than it was before his or her arrival. By that measure, Judge Mamiya’s contributions to Seattle Community Court will be lasting and that goal amply accomplished. He leaves the court in the capable hands of Judge Bonner and this transition should be even easier than the last. The Community Court Team thanks and recognizes him for those contributions.

Summer CAB Meeting Recognizes its Volunteers

By Stephanie Tschida

In addition to recognizing a great community partner, the Summer Meeting of the Citizen Advisory Board was also a great opportunity to thank the many volunteers who help to make the community court a special place. The end of July also marked the end of the terms of our core Community Court AmeriCorps Team.



Eunice Yang, Mark Braseth, Danny Steyer, Jeff Atwood, and Leila Brandon, with Stephanie Tschida (seated) at Celebration

This year’s core team of Mark Braseth, Eunice Yang, Danny Steyer, and Jeff Atwood, were a sensational group. Important additional assistance was provided by AmeriCorps Links members Leila Brandon and Toshiko Hasegawa. This team worked alongside of and helped support hundreds of community court defendants in doing

their community service. They have reached out to and helped developed new community service sites. They have written articles for this newsletter and have performed important data entry supporting our program evaluation efforts. They have also been willing and able to pitch in and help with whatever needed to be done. Most importantly, they have reached out to and touched the lives of hundreds of defendants who have come through our court.

A testament to the team’s collective impact is probably no more evident than in the many highly positive comments coming from defendants as they reported on their community service experience at their Community Court graduation ceremonies. We wish them the best of luck in the future.

New Holly P-Patch Blooms with Help of Community Court

By Stephanie Tschida

Starting in May of this year, Seattle Community Court defendants began work at a new community service site at our third city P-Patch, the New Holly Community Garden, located in the city's South Precinct. The garden had been neglected for some time and many of the beds were overgrown, paths were filled with weeds and tall grass, and it was marginally usable for members of the community.



New Holly p-Patch prior to renovation

Initially, eight Community Court defendants reported to the site as part of their obligation to complete community service. Monitored by our AmeriCorps team and Kenya Fredie, the Department

of Neighborhoods P-Patch Coordinator, the participants began the much needed work to restore the site. They immediately began to clear the paths and overgrown beds, working very hard to accomplish the task so that residents of this highly diverse neighborhood could begin to use the beds to plant their gardens.



Community Court defendants tackle the renovation.

The work team was joined by two Ethiopian women from the neighborhood who barely spoke English, but the universal language of gardening seemed to break down any language barriers that existed between them. By the end of the day, the team had cut down all of the weeds, had cleared the pathways, and had repaired several of the plots with recycled planks. Great progress was made towards restoring the p-patch as a community asset.

Subsequent follow-up crews continued the work by removing weeds and spreading bark on the pathways. Before long, the p-patch was again ready for use by the community. Kenya Fredie was most impressed. “During tight economic times the Community Court Program has truly been a valuable resource, and we look forward to building upon our partnership. I love it when gardening arouses fond memories, life stories are shared, and the common respect for nature produces joyful moments for all to experience.” she said.

As the photos amply demonstrate, it’s amazing what great things a community service crew can accomplish in short order. The photos visually describe that

progress. Defendant Mark B. perhaps summed it up best at his Community Court “graduation” ceremony as he described his work at the site to Judge Ron Mamiya. “It was cool. Felt good, actually like I was doing something for the community. People are going to use that garden and I’m going to be able to come back and take a look at it when it’s done. So, pretty cool,” he said. Pretty cool indeed.



New Hooley p-patch shows great progress.

Seattle Community Court Team Salutes Lorri Cox

By the Seattle Community Court Team

On June 30 of this year, Lorri Cox, a strategic advisor with Seattle Municipal Court and a key member of the Community Court Team, left the Court to serve in an important new role in King County’s effort to end homelessness. Though we were sad to see her go, we are sure that Lorri will have as much an impact in her new job as she has had on Seattle Community Court.



Lorri Cox with (left to right) SMC Judge Fred Bonner, SMC Chief Clerk Bob White, Seattle City Attorney Tom Carr, PCS Div. Chief Bob Hood, and former ACA Director Dave Chapman at a Seattle Municipal Court Employee Recognition Ceremony for Lorri earlier this year.

While with the Seattle Municipal Court, Lorri played many important roles in her position as a strategic advisor. She spearheaded the CoStars Program which successfully helped many formerly homeless, chronic low risk offenders find permanent stable housing, meaningful employment, and a permanent path out of the criminal justice system. She also played a critical role in the development of the Seattle Municipal Court’s Court Resource Center, where she helped design and implement the program, trained and supervised many of its volunteers, and built strong cross-agency partnerships to provide optimal social services help for defendants coming through the court.

But for the Seattle Community Court family, Lorri’s greatest contributions were in her unceasing efforts on behalf of Seattle Community Court itself. Lorri was on the ground floor and a key player in the founding of this innovative problem-solving court. She joined us in trips to Portland Community Court and helped us develop the vision and the mission of the court. She staffed the Community Court Steering Committee and helped to insure that issues and problems were identified and resolved. She also was a tireless advocate for the Court and helped to build the processes and mentor the staff needed to evaluate and report on the court’s outcomes.

City Attorney Tom Carr describes Lorri as one of those “unique people who can take the ideas and vision of others and work to operationalize them and turn the dream into a reality. We wouldn’t be where we are today without Lorri’s contributions.”

The Seattle Community Court will miss her dearly, but finds solace in the notion that she is tackling one of the most serious issues facing our community. The best part about her new position is that she will have plenty of chances to continue to work with us on matters of mutual concern as she takes on issue of homelessness for King County. We wish her the best of luck and good wishes in her new position.

Breaking News:

“Did you know that sometime during the first week of June of this year, the 25,000th hour of community service was completed through the regular Community Court Program?”

New Community Service Sites Join Community Court Partnership

By Stephanie Tschida

One of the important parts of our Community Court Program is working with our community partners to insure that there are a sufficient number of sites where defendants can “give back” to neighborhoods affected by crime by doing meaningful community service. Many communities from around Seattle have stepped up to offer just such projects. Two of our newer great partnerships are with the Magnusen Environmental Stewardship Alliance (MESA) and Meadowbrook Community Care.

MESA is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating and involving the community in the stewardship of Warren G. Magnuson Park. Their Promontory Point Habitat Enhancement Project involves a 25-acre site located in the Southeast corner of the park where invasive vegetation is being removed and native plants and trees are being replanted to make a more varied and welcome habitat for wildlife. Seattle Community Court community service crews have provided assistance to that work by joining MESA work crews. They have also assisted MESA by helping maintain a native plant nursery located towards the north end of Magnuson Park. Plants from the nursery are used in MESA’s habitat enhancement projects.

*Spotlight on
"In their own words"*

Defendants comment on their community service and community court experience at their "graduation" ceremonies:

"It was an interesting experience working with the Millionaire Club and seeing that ah, what can happen if you really don't have it together and where you can end up being. So I can see where things can lead if stuff gets out of hand. Not pretty."

Mark C.

"Well, I actually enjoyed it, I enjoyed working with the Metropolitan Improvement District. They want me to come in and fill an application out. Well it just, it taught me, yunno that what I did was wrong and yunno I had to pay for it. I signed up for GAU and food stamps downstairs this morning. And housing and also I have an appointment to get my driver's license, take the test in the morning."

Roy P.

"It felt really good. It made me feel whole inside. I loved all of it and the people. Thank you so very much."

Kristi S.

"I had some time to think about what I did. It was stupid. I appreciated the opportunity your Honor. You won't see me again."

Ronnie H.

"Yeah, I got reading glasses. The Native American Center is helping me to get my checks. It's been well worth it. It's a great program."

Yolanda F.

"I learned a lot of things. Helped me to look at the whole thing from a different perspective."

Kim H.

Meadowbrook Community Care is a relatively new non-profit organization serving North Seattle. Included within their projects are water, habitat, and trail restoration along Thorton Creek near the Meadowbrook Community Center and support of an overnight homeless shelter operated at the Mapleleaf Lutheran Church. Seattle Community Court defendants have assisted their Thorton Creek efforts by joining their work crews.

These locations are just a small sample of the many places across the City where we have active community service partnerships (see map on pg. 8). As defendants put in meaningful hours of community service work restoring these neighborhoods, we hope that their eyes will be opened to the impact of their offenses and some of the many social services that are available to help them get back on track.

The Seattle Community Court Ameri-Corp Team continues to reach out to new sites and is always in the hunt for new locations. If you are aware of any other opportunities for such partnerships, please call me, Stephanie Tschida, at the City Attorney's Office at 684-7731.

By the Numbers: Seattle Community Court Stats

By Bob Hood

The Seattle Community Court program is into its fifth year of operations and defendants seen, hours of service completed, and social services contacts made continue on the upswing. The first half of this year saw a marked increase in the number of defendants coming into Community Court, most likely due to a change in policy wherein qualified defendants could have their case dismissed if they completed all of their program requirements within 14 days. A total of 500 defendants entered the court during the year's first six months of this year. If that rate of increase holds, Seattle Community Court should see well over 1,000 defendants this year, a new record.

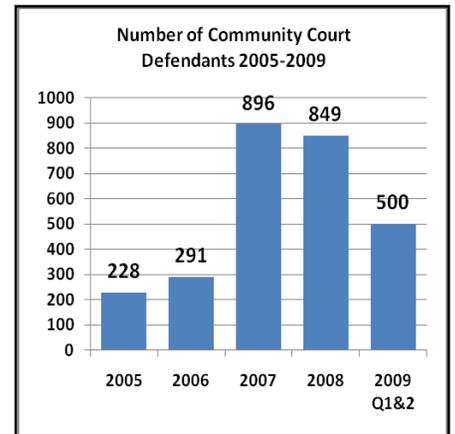


Table 1. Number of Community Court Defendants

A similar improvement occurred in the number of community service hours being completed. In the first half of this year, another 5,623 hours of community service was performed by Seattle Community Court defendants. This was close to nearly all the service performed in 2007 and if this rate continues, 2009 service could approach 12,000 hours, a new milestone.

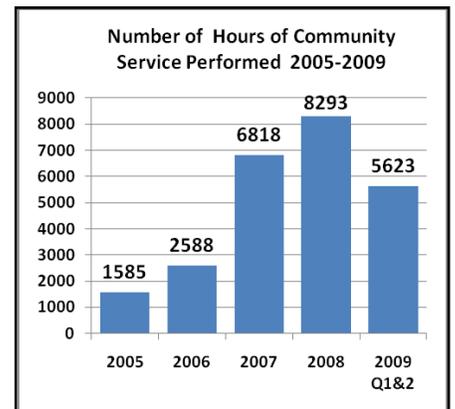


Table 2. Number of Community Service Hours Performed

This increase in hours was driven in part by the fact that 2009 defendants averaged nearly 1.4 more hours of completed community service than their 2008 counterparts, a 14% increase, and also a new record high. This reflects a 60% increase in the hours of service performed per defendant over that performed in 2005. This is a testament to the great work being done by the Court's probation monitors, Jason Pina and Kent Hay, our AmeriCorps Team, and our community service site partners.

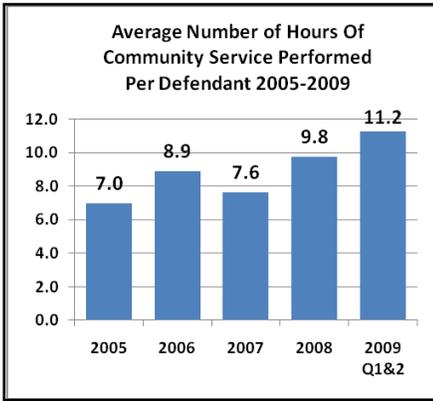


Table 3. Hours of Community Service Performed per Defendant

Of additional interest, Tricia Lapitan, a Seattle Municipal Court Strategic Advisor reports that over 45% of all defendants are now completing all of their court mandated requirements. She also reports that over 4,150 social services contacts have actually been made by community court defendants, an average of nearly 1.5 contacts per defendant.

Breaking News:

“Did you know that sometime during the beginning of June of this year, the 10,000th hour of community service was completed through the Community Court Pretrial Diversion Program?”

Finally, the pretrial diversion program, whose community court hours are assigned and monitored through the Community Court Program, also continues to contribute community service hours. Stephanie Tschida, the Community Service Coordinator for the City Attorney’s Office reports that pretrial diversion defendants did another 2,287 hours of community service in the first half of this year. That brings the totals for community service through pretrial diversion to nearly 10,500 hours since early 2007.

But it’s not all just about the numbers. In the process, defendants have provided street and neighborhood cleanups in Belltown and Pioneer Square, environmental restoration in Beacon Hill, West Seattle, and the International District, assisted community p-patches in New Holley and Highpoint, assisted foodbanks in Ballard and the Central District, and painted out graffiti in Lake City. Hopefully some of them have also received some help that will allow them to live more crime-free lives.

Focus on: Philadelphia Community Court

By Bob Hood

As part of our continuing series on community courts located across the United States and around the world, today we examine the Philadelphia Community Court (PCC) located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia Community Court opened its doors on February 25, 2002 as the 20th community court in the nation and the first in Pennsylvania. The PCC, like our own community court, is based on a broad partnership that includes the City of Philadelphia, the First Judicial District, the District Attorney, the Defender Association, the Police Department, the City Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs, and the Center City District. The court currently serves ten contiguous police districts (precincts) in Philadelphia and covers an area with a population of about 380,000 people.

The court handles cases involving both misdemeanors and what are known as summary offenses under Pennsylvania law. Typical cases include things like retail theft, criminal mischief and vandalism, graffiti, theft from auto, disorderly conduct, minor drug crimes, panhandling, and prostitution. The Court saw approximately 10,000 cases in the last calendar year, 75% of which involved summary offenses.

Defendants normally are assigned to 18-24 hours of community service at approximately twenty sites located around Philadelphia. All of sites are non-profit organizations that supervise defendants during their community service. Typical community service assignments include sidewalk cleaning, graffiti removal, and landscape maintenance. The Court also provides defendants with a broad range of social services help based on needs assessment performed as part of the court process. Some services are provided in-house, while others are through referrals to outside agencies. Jail is rarely used as a sanction because of long-standing and chronic jail overcrowding that exists in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Community Court, like our own, utilizes a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) which includes citizen and police representatives from each of the police districts, PCC staff, and representatives from the public defenders, the District Attorney’s Office, and from the City’s Office of Supportive Housing Office. The CAP meets every other month to help identify community service sites and share information on what is happening in the court and in the neighborhood.

During its seven year life, the PCC has heard over 50,000 cases, produced over 375,000 hours of community service and collected over \$1.4 million in fines and costs. It has also helped inspire many other community court projects around the country. PCC Court Coordinator William Babcock is a regular and thoughtful contributor to Center for Court Innovation community court listserve where practitioners can share information and work on commonly held problems. If you ever venture to Philadelphia, Philadelphia Community Court is well worth a visit.

To learn more about the Philadelphia Community Court you can go to:

<http://www.centercityphila.org/about/Community.php>

Seattle Community Court
June 2, 2009
Community Service Sites

