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JUVENILE
JUSTICE
ALLIANCE

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Perception or Reality?

From the Executive Director's Desk

This is the time of year when goblins appear on the doorstep. It's good form to seem a bit scared before handing over the candy. The trick-or-treaters know we're just playacting. It's harmless fun to pretend scary monsters are walking the streets.

When it comes to crime, adults are not always so adept at separating reality from fantasy. Public perception is that crime is on the rise and that young people are involved in a shocking number of violent acts. Neither is remotely true. But these perceptions can skew public policy, pushing toward a more punitive – and counter-productive – approach to crime control.



So how do we fight these perceptions? Well, how do you convince a child there's no monster under the bed? You get down on the floor with a flashlight and you show him. You fight fear with facts.

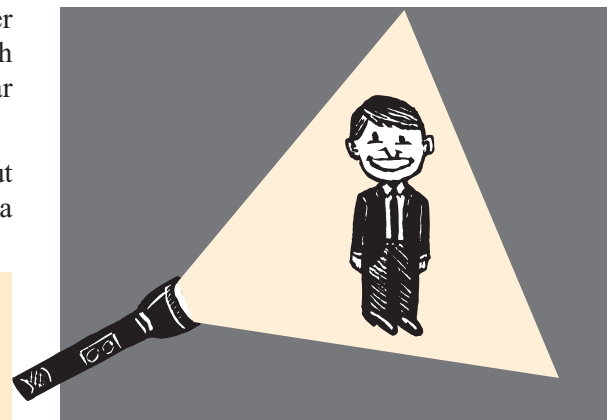
Next time you hear someone lamenting about crime and "these kids running wild," shine a few of these facts on those fears:

Arrests of Connecticut youth under the age of 18 dropped 26% between 1995 and 2004.

While there was a slight upturn in youth violence in the state in 2004, the overall trend is downward. In 1996, 1,610 youth under age 18 were arrested for such offenses. In 2004, the number was 1,305.

Crime statistics usually come from the federal Department of Justice and can be as much as four years old. That's why I was especially interested in a study just released by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Jeffrey A. Butts looked at police statistics from 100 cities in the U.S. through 2007 (no Connecticut cities are included in the study). Dr. Butts found that the news on crime is still good. Two-thirds of the population in the study live in places where crime remains at historically low levels. Even in places where the 30-year downward trend has ended, we are by no means seeing new crime waves of any sign that the bad old days of the 1980s have returned.

It's not news when crime doesn't happen. Yet a single crime can dominate the news for weeks. In the public mind, violent crime becomes the norm. It's hard work convincing people otherwise. Any parent knows it can take many nights before a child is convinced that there is indeed no monster under the bed. The key is for us all to keep pointing our flashlights at this issue until reality wins out.




Abby Anderson



Get Tough on Crime, Not on Kids

by Edward Meyer, From *Corrections Today*

Every year, 200,000 American children go through the adult criminal justice system. Most are charged with minor, non-violent offenses. They will carry adult records that will make nearly every good and productive aspiration - from getting a student loan to landing a first job - more difficult, if not impossible. They may serve time in adult facilities, where they are at high risk of victimization and where they will get little in the way of drug treatment, schooling or any of the other services we know can help troubled kids get back on track.

My state, Connecticut, had a particularly bad record in its treatment of juveniles. We automatically prosecuted anyone over the age of 15 as an adult, no matter how minor the crime. In the recent Connecticut General Assembly session, my fellow legislators voted overwhelmingly to raise the age of adult prosecution to 18 in most cases. (Violent crimes will continue to be treated as adult offenses, even when the defendant is a minor.) Why would I, a state senator representing a district made up largely of affluent suburbs, passionately support such a move?

The answer is easy: I'm an old prosecutor; I believe in being tough on crime. Treating young offenders like adult criminals is not tough on crime. In fact, it is a wonderful incubator for crime, as research consistently shows that placing children in adult prisons increases the likelihood that they will re-offend and escalate into violence. The national trend toward "adultification" is merely tough on kids.

Throughout the 1990s, many states made it easier to try children as adults. They were spurred on by predictions of a new class of "super-predator" juveniles, predictions that have since been discredited. Yet bad laws inspired by this hysteria are still on the books.

Rehabilitation is sorely lacking in the adult prison system. I recall a conversation with a warden at a high security prison, much like the prisons where I'd worked hard to send criminals as a federal prosecutor. What, I asked him, was his proudest achievement?

"In the 20 years I've been warden," he answered, "there have been no escapes."

That encapsulates for me the tragedy that is the American criminal justice system. The goal of adult

prisons is containment, not rehabilitation. This explains why I kept prosecuting the same criminals over and over again. This explains why nationally the recidivism rate stands at 67 percent. This explains why the more than \$38 billion we spend building and operating prisons annually fails miserably to make us safer.

The counseling, educational and vocational services absent in most adult prisons are far more abundant in juvenile facilities. Abundant enough? Sadly, no. But a child in a juvenile facility stands a much better chance of having an experience that will change his or her future for the better. We continue to provide these experiences in our juvenile system because we recognize that teenagers are works in progress, as any parent will tell you. These are years of enormous change and growth. What kind of change and what kind of growth are largely up to us as adults.

I was involved in one reentry program for inmates in New York that reduced recidivism by 40 percent through vocational training, housing assistance and other supports. We called ourselves The South 40 Corporation, a reference to the agricultural term for uncultivated land. We saw the men we served as a lost resource to the community. The United States incarcerates a higher percentage of its population than any nation in the world. Most will come out of prison prepared to do little else but return.

It saddens me that we are resigned to losing the potential of millions of Americans. It appalls me that so many of those Americans are children.

I believe that the tide is turning toward an enlightened preference for rehabilitation. Congress is currently considering the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which provides basic protections for children as well as resources and incentives for states to invest in delinquency prevention and rehabilitation. All states should review their own policies, as we just did in Connecticut, and national leaders must take action.

Edward Meyer is a state senator from Guilford, Connecticut and co-chair of the Connecticut General Assembly's Select Committee on Children. He is a former Assistant US Attorney who specialized in prosecuting organized crime.



GRACE - (Girls Recovering And Cultivating Empowerment)

When 13-year-old Shamika was admitted to GRACE alternative detention program, she was a child who engaged in self destructive behavior, suffered from low self-esteem and faced a language barrier, as Spanish is her first language. Shamika had already experimented with crack, ecstasy, marijuana, and alcohol and was engaging in promiscuous behavior. She was regularly defying her mother and not attending school. Shamika was going down a slippery slope of high-risk behaviors and activities.

Then she was placed at GRACE.

G.R.A.C.E ADP

GRACE stands for *Girls Recovering and Cultivating Empowerment* and it serves as a residential alternative to state or community-based detention for girls ages 12 to 16. GRACE is a girls-only facility that uses relationship-based programs like Girls' Circle and TARGET (see sidebar) and ensures family involvement in the rehabilitative process by allowing daily family phone calls and visits.

Contracted through the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, GRACE is run by Community Partners in Action, a non-profit criminal justice service provider. Located in Hartford, Connecticut, GRACE can house up to six girls for stays as short as two days or as long as three months. The dedicated 13-person staff, including a program manager, case worker, shift supervisors, and child

ing on their behavior management level, the girls at GRACE can wear their own clothes, shop at the GRACE store, wear makeup and earrings, and visit the in-house beauty salon. They may go ice-skating, play ping-pong or have pizza-party sleepovers.

Education is critically important to the success of the girls at GRACE. Teachers instruct the residents in math, English, social studies and science, and provide special education classes. For example, Shamika's struggle to read, write and speak English caused her to act out in the GRACE school program. The staff and teachers responded with daily mentoring and by pairing Shamika with another resident to serve as a peer mentor. When she was discharged from the program, Shamika was at a higher reading level and, as a result of all the efforts to improve her skills, said she was now enjoying school work.

GRACE has served approximately 160 girls since it opened in 2005. Because so many kids cycle through its doors, GRACE makes a concerted effort to keep in touch with former residents. Staff maintains contact with approximately 80 percent of the girls who have come through the program, and Shamika is one of those girls. GRACE helped lift her spirits, self-esteem and confidence. As a result, Shamika left GRACE as a more independent, self-sufficient and school-oriented young woman, and has not returned to the juvenile justice system.

TARGET (Trauma Adaptive Recovery Group Education and Therapy)

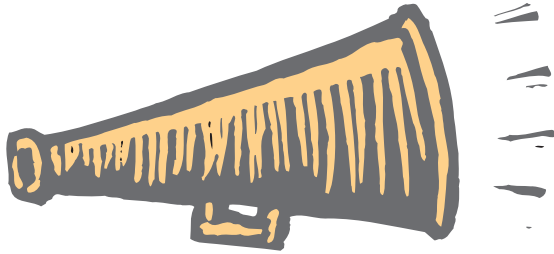
– interventions delivered in a group setting over 4 or 10 sessions, depending upon a girl's length of stay. Interventions include access to group therapy, one-on-one counseling, and concepts such as SOS (Slow down, Orient, and Self check), teaching juvenile trauma survivors skills that enable them to safely process stress while shifting focus from past trauma.

Girls Circle – group sessions that are strength-based, gender relevant and culturally responsible. Facilitators are provided with a framework for 8-to-12 week programs with skill-building themes and activities that promote self-reflection by the girls. The program themes include: being a girl, diversity, relationship with peers, identity, connections between mind, body and spirit, expressing individuality, and paths to the future.



care workers, works closely with all of the girls to encourage and motivate them towards healthy and productive lifestyle choices.

The design of the building and recreation/reward programs are specific to girls. The walls are decorated by GRACE residents and are covered in hearts, flowers, butterflies, and other artwork in vibrant colors such as turquoise, pink, and yellow. Depend-

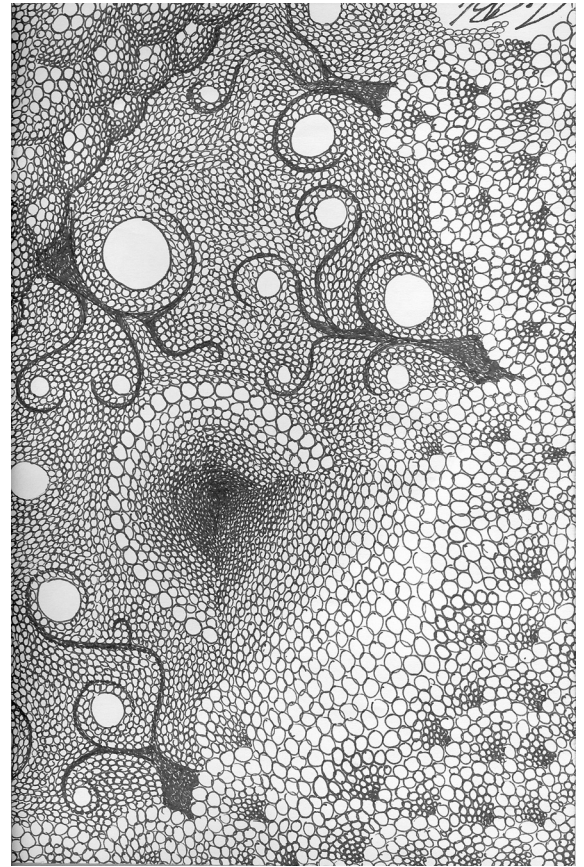


Calling All Artists for CTJJA's Art Show!

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance is currently organizing an art show featuring works by youth in the juvenile justice system. The show will be displayed in the Small Space Gallery at the Arts Council of Greater New Haven from January 20 – March 13, 2009 and is partially funded by a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. The theme, “Who I am on the Inside,” is designed to give youth the freedom to express themselves through their work and help show-goers to see the youth as more than their label.

Youth from all stages of the juvenile justice system, from pre-adjudication to residential and community-based programs to incarceration, will display their artwork. Through this outlet, participants will be able to show themselves as creative, talented people with hopes, fears, and possibilities. This exhibit will also bring juvenile justice issues to a wider audience.

The Alliance hopes to provide audio and visual components to support the show, including either a website and/or a book of compiled artwork. In addition, the Alliance is aiming to fully involve youths in the show by assisting with transportation to bring them and their families to the reception, and also by putting their work up for sale. This will provide a way for kids to see a tangible, positive reward for their efforts and good work.



Entry by a youth from the CJTS program.

Much has been done already to make this an outstanding event, but we still need your help!

Calling All Artists! The gallery can hold approximately 80 pieces, and the Alliance is still looking to collect artwork from youth around the state. The pieces can be any size or shape and from any program / facility, as long as the artist is/was recently involved in the juvenile justice system.

Assembling Peer Juries. The Alliance would like to travel a compilation of the artwork around the state to various programs and facilities. If you are interested in gathering a group of youths to judge the artwork, please contact us.

The Alliance's art show will be an inspiring example of how to help young people express themselves and engage the wider community in the lives and dreams of these young people. We thank you in advance for your help and participation!



The CTJJA Art Gallery

GRACE ADP is a residential alternative to state or community-based detention for girls ages 12 to 16. In the Hartford, CT facility, the girls express themselves creatively in many facets, from painting names and pictures on the building's walls to writing poetry. Featured below are poems contributed from the talented girls at GRACE. (Note: all poems appear in their original form).

Love is like a Rose

*love is like a rose
smooth, soft, & tender*

*love is like a rose
tall, firm, & stronge*

*love is like a rose
beautiful with never lasting love*

*so can you tell me why
love is like a rose?*

—by Diana, 15 years old

Why?

*Why is life so hard?
Why does love have to hurt?
Why am I so selfish?
Who am I gonna hurt?*

*What cant they see Im really not crazy?
Im not doing wrong, who understands me?
I just want to chill, I just wanna do me,
I just want my parents to understand me.
I just want you to love me truely for me.
So tell me mother why dont you love me?*

*I love you oh mother so please tell
Me why, why, why me?*

—by Diana, 15 years old

Blessing in Disguise

*Sometimes in life we regret so much. Things
that are blessings make you feel so burnt up.*

*My daughter was suppose to bring joy, but
instead it brought pain to my life. Deep down
inside I'm hurting, but I know one day she
will soon bring me life, joy, happiness. When*

I see her smile she makes me warm inside.

When she looks at me I brighten her world.

I can't tell by the way her eyes brighten up.

*When I look at her I see a child that wants to
be loved, loved by me every single day.*

—Anonymous, 13 years old

Love at first site

When I first heard of you

I was afraid to meet you

When I first meet you

I was afraid to hold you

When I first held you

I was afraid to kiss you

When I first kissed you

I was afraid to be with you

Now that Im with you

Im afraid to loose you

Loosing you isnt something I woud want

Thats why I gave you and just you with my heart!

—by Nashema



Research Finds

Getting the Facts Straight: NCCD Questions the Impending Crime Wave

The National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD) reviewed the Third Way report, *The Impending Crime Wave*, released in February 2008, and identified troubling flaws with its arguments and the data used to support them. NCCD found that the described “trends” are based on incorrect data, much of which was drawn from news stories or out-dated data reports. In addition, the threatening tone of the report’s title and language is a deliberate attempt to foster fear through the use of false statements. For more information on NCCD, visit: www.nccd-crc.org



Juvenile Justice Model Guidebook and Process Map

Representing a systemic change in how juvenile justice is delivered, for the first time troubled children in Miami-Dade County who commit a minor offense will have the opportunity to attain complete and targeted treatment services without the stigma of an arrest. The Miami-Dade County Juvenile Justice Model Guidebook provides a synopsis of the history of the Juvenile Services Department, the components of the Juvenile Justice Model, the process guide, and relevant information on available diversion programs and community service programs: www.miamidade.gov/jsd/library/MDC%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Model%20BookFINAL.pdf

A Sensible Model for Juvenile Justice

The Youth Transition Funders’ Group report argues that the current juvenile justice system addresses the causes, rather than the effects of crime. It recommends implementing a theoretically-oriented model to provide early interventions for juveniles, namely Positive Youth Development (PYD). The full report can be found at: www.ytfg.org/documents/ASensibleModelforJuvenileJusticeSummer2008.pdf

From Trauma to Tragedy: CT Girls in Adult Prison

This report, from the Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), details the stories of girls from the ages of 15 – 18 who spent time at York Correctional Institution (YCI), Connecticut’s only prison for adult women. It highlights the system involvement in most of these girls’ lives from a very young age and questions how their needs went unmet for so long. The full report detailing the conditions, problems, and recommendations for reform system-wide can be found at: www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/From_Tauma_to_Tragedy_CT_-_Girls_in_Adult_Prison_7-08.pdf

Missing Out: Suspending Students from Connecticut Schools

This Connecticut Voices for Children study reports on the use of out-of-school suspensions to discipline K-12 students throughout the state. The report points to research on school discipline practices, which indicates that over-reliance on suspensions is not only ineffective, but can be counterproductive in terms of student behavior and educational outcomes. The full report can be found at: www.ctkidslink.org/publications/edu08missingout.pdf

Juvenile Transfer Laws: An Effective Deterrent to Delinquency?

This report, published by the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, looks at transfers of juveniles to the adult system and its effects on deterring crime. One of the many findings: laws that make it easier to transfer youth to the adult system have little to no deterrent effect on juvenile crime, and youth transferred to the adult system are more likely to re-offend than youth who committed similar crimes but remained in the juvenile system. The report is at: www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/220595.pdf



The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance
legislative agenda for the upcoming
2008-2009 session:

YES = YES



With **Youth Empowered to Succeed,**
You Ensure Public Safety

Say YES! to healthy families. Families with Service Needs (FWSN) cases include youth who are truant, run away from home or engage in out-of-control behavior. A reformed FWSN system, begun in 2007, must be fully rolled out. For example, only 39 of the state's 169 towns are currently served by a Family Support Center (which assists the highest need FWSN families).

Say YES! to better schools. The 2007 in-school suspension bill, due to be implemented in the fall of 2009, requires most suspensions to be served in-school, rather than out-of-school. The Alliance is pushing for guidelines and implementation that changes policies and practices to prevent the need for suspensions of any type in the first place.

Say YES! to safe communities. In 2007, Connecticut decided to **Raise the Age**. Aside from serious and violent offenders youth up to the age of 18 will be under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system as of January 1, 2010. Because there will be more youth entering the juvenile system, the state agencies need sufficient funds to effectively serve and treat them. Also, legislation to specify how these youth will be processed in the juvenile system must be passed.

Say YES! and Join The Alliance's fight for Juvenile Justice Reform!

Advocacy Meetings. The Alliance holds monthly advocacy meetings around the state to gather advocates, parents, community providers, and anyone else who is interested in our efforts to share ideas on goals and strategies for the legislative session.

Community Breakfasts. We will be holding community (previously called "legislative") breakfasts around the state beginning in November. Breakfasts bring together all of the above mentioned partners as well as legislators in order to inform and involve communities about juvenile justice reform and show legislators that communities care about their youth.

For more information on upcoming meetings and breakfasts, **visit www.ctjja.org** We'd love to see you at any or all of our events!

a program of RYASAP
Regional Youth Adult
Substance Abuse Program



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NEW RAISE THE AGE WEBSITE!



A Success Story

How Connecticut is moving
from being one of the most punitive states
to one of the most progressive

produced by



with funding from

The Tow Foundation | Campaign for Youth Justice | The JEHT Foundation

The Public Welfare Foundation | The Rockit Fund | The Connecticut Health Foundation

The Alliance recently launched an interactive, online report that outlines the success of the Raise the Age CT campaign. You can find the site at www.raisetheagect.org. The purpose of the site is to give an insider, behind-the-scenes look at the campaign. Our hope is that other groups and individuals can use it as a model for their own advocacy work, whether their core issue is juvenile justice or not.

While this is a "success story," please understand that the title doesn't mean the fight is over. We understand that true success won't be achieved until arrested 16- and 17-year olds stay in the juvenile justice system. It is important to keep the momentum strong and this website is one way to keep people talking. Take a look, you just might find a picture of yourself in an orange shirt!