

Miami County Juvenile Court 2008 Annual Report



Welcome to Miami County Juvenile Court

The Juvenile Court of Miami County is a division of the Miami County Common Pleas Court. Our purpose is to counsel and rehabilitate youth who commit crimes, protect the Miami County community from juvenile crime, assist the victims of juvenile crime, protect children from abuse, neglect, and dependency and provide allocation of parental rights for children whose parents were never married. Under the direction of Judge Lynnita K.C. Wagner, the Court provided a broad range of community based residential treatment and prevention services. This summary is intended to help you understand the services we provided in 2008.



Judge Lynnita K.C. Wagner

Miami County Juvenile Court

Special points of interest:

- Transition for the Court
- Probation Department starts Girls Circle Groups
- Probation Department partners with ODJFS for Jobs Group
- Probation Department publishes Operations Manual
- Bridges out of Poverty Training
- Collection of fines and court costs
- Court participates in Ohio Summit for Children
- 2008 Statistical Summary

Transition for the Court: Commitment to public service



Ohio State Representative Dr. Richard Adams presenting a proclamation honoring Judge Lynnita K.C. Wagner at her retirement reception.

Judge Lynnita K.C. Wager retired from office on Jan. 31 after serving two terms as the Probate/Juvenile Judge for Miami County. Judge Wagner had over 30 years service with Miami County. She served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and Juvenile Court Magistrate before being elected as Judge in 1997.

Judge W. McGregor Dixon Jr. was elected Probate/Juvenile Judge in November 2008 after practicing law for 35 years and serving as Law Director for the City of Troy for over 29 years.



Judge W. McGregor Dixon, Jr. assumes office February 9, 2009

Probation Department starts Girls Circle Group

Probation Officer Abigail Henderson and Prevention Officer Stephanie Henning were looking for a way to connect with the girls on their caseloads. "After going through training for Girls Circle, we knew we had found just the program that would meet the needs of the girls we are supervising," said Henderson.

The Girls Circle was created in 1997 to fill a critical need for gender-specific programs. The Girls Circle is a support group designed for girls ages 9-18. The program consists of 8-10 week modules which foster self-esteem and help girls maintain an authentic connection with peers and adult women in their community. Each module focuses on a different

issue to help girls cope with self doubt and give them an avenue for self expression through verbal sharing and creative activities. The program has proven to be effective with every socio-economic, racial and family background.

"I think the girls have gotten a lot out of the group. Even though they face difficult issues, they feel more supported. One young woman told me that it was nice to know that there were others who had the same problems as she did," said Henning. "It has been amazing to watch them work on the creative projects. Many of these young women have a lot of talent that has not been expressed; they just need a positive outlet," she added.



"Bowls of Forgiveness" Girls Circle Creative Activity

Jobs Group helps kids prepare for employment



Justin Sommer, Workforce Development Coordinator at Job and Family Services

The Juvenile Probation Department in partnership with Job and Family Services began offering a youth employment skills group to assist youth in becoming more successful in finding employment. "We were noticing that many youth on probation were unable to fulfill court orders to pay fines and court costs because they could not find a job. Many of them did not know where to start, so we decided to help them with this project," said Chief Probation Officer Randall Freeman. "Job and Family Services

seemed like a logical place to start, but most kids had never heard of it," said Freeman.

Justin Sommer, Workforce Development Coordinator at Job and Family Services welcomed the idea. He designed and implemented a 4-week program that focuses on practical information, such as how to write a resume, how to do a job search and how to conduct yourself in an interview. Youth are ordered into the program. Probation Officers attend each weekly session to help facilitate the group, assure attendance, and reinforce learning.

Probation Department publishes operations manual

Chief Probation Officer Randall Freeman has seen many probation officers come and go over the years "It always had been my dream to have a manual that would explain department operations. It would make training new officers so much easier," said Freeman. Facing his last year before retirement, Freeman was determined to do just that. With the help of a group of seasoned probation officers, the department was able to publish its first operations manual. With over 300 pages, the manual covers all aspects of services. Freeman noted, "It gave

us a chance to review everything that we do and make sure we are being consistent."

"This was an extraordinary project and one that has really benefited the department through transition," said Charlene Prestopino, Court Administrator. "Much of the manual is based on the American Correctional Association standards, so we know that we have focused on best practices," said Freeman. The Department has received requests for copies from other juvenile probation departments.



Randall Freeman Chief Probation Officer

Bridges out of Poverty and Circles of Hope



Allison Dehart from Partners in Hope presenting at all staff in-service on Circles of Hope Program

The entire Probate/Juvenile Court staff attended an all day seminar entitled "Bridges out of Poverty" conducted by Phillip DeVol. Based on the work of Dr. Ruby K. Payne, it teaches participants the hidden rules that govern behavior and interactions within different economic classes. Persons raised in poverty are often over-represented in the court system. By better understanding the challenges faced by people in poverty and by learning to suspend the judgments that often accompany interactions, court personnel can be partners in paving the way to economic stability. "I think the seminar helped us under-

stand how even our language reflects the hidden rules of social class. If we are going to communicate with our clients, we have to understand where they are coming from," said Tom Bomhard, chair of the staff development committee that organized the event.

Part of the day included a presentation by Allison DeHart and Sonia Holycross from Partners in Hope. Their Circles of Hope program uses Bridges strategies. By surrounding the family with a circle of helpers in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the family can exercise choice and power in designing their own "future stories."

Holding youth accountable through the collection of court costs and fines

Noticing a three year decline in the collection of fines and court costs, the court set a goal of reviewing the collection procedures and working toward improving the process.

"It seemed ridiculous for the court to order costs and fines if we weren't going to collect them," said Beverly Bell, Chief Deputy.

"Besides, this is part of the rehabilitation process, to be accountable for your mistakes," agreed Intensive Probation Officer Elizabeth Smedley. So the Court convened a committee, chaired by Bell that included clerks, probation officers, fiscal representatives, a magistrate

and the judge. The group came up with a number of strategies including holding court review hearings, sending statements, helping kids find jobs and suspending driver's licenses.

"We knew we had to build in set timelines and a reward to get the kids to buy-in," said Smedley. If a youth agrees to pay in full within 24 hours, a portion of the fine is suspended.

"We know we have a long way to go with our accounts receivable, but our efforts have apparently worked since collections were up by over \$20,000 this year," said Fiscal Officer, Angela Hubbard.



Committee members: Scott Auxier, Elizabeth Smedley, Becca Hall, Angie Hubbard, Heather Lewis, Beverly Bell and Becky Householder

Court participates in Ohio Summit for Children



In 2008, the Ohio Supreme Court offered counties an opportunity to participate in the Ohio Summit for Children. The summit was intended to bring stakeholders together to foster collaborative efforts between county agencies and the state to enhance the safety and well being of system-involved youth.

Miami County sent a team that included representatives from the Court, Children's Services, Mental Health, Family and Chil-

dren's First and the schools. After participating in the initial training, this team has met regularly to develop an action plan to identify and solve local problems.

"A key concept for the Miami County team is developing the idea of 'community kids' where all child-serving agencies join to nurture children and their families," said Magistrate Gretchen Beers, committee chair.

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www.co.miami.oh.us

For a copy of the entire annual
report call 440-5990

2008 Statistical Summary

Cases Filed/Transferred In	2008	Dispositions for Youth	2008
Delinquent	1342	Bind over to Adult Court	0
Traffic	651	Commitment to Department of Youth Services	2
Dependency/Neglect/Abuse	60	Detention	356
Unruly	308	David L. Brown Youth Center	19
Adult	160	West Central Day Treatment	53
Permanent Custody	24	West Central Juvenile Rehabilitation Center	13
Custody/Change of Custody/Visitation	857	Other CCF/COYC	4
Support Enforcement/Modifications	1680	Community Service	456
Parentage	70	Probation	112
UIFSA	11	Prevention	70
Other	1	Electronic Home Monitoring	55
Transferred/Reactivated		House Arrest	466
Total Cases Filed	5164	Temporary Custody to Children Services	30
		Protective Supervision to Children Services	98
		Permanent Custody to Children Services	22
		Jail Sentences (Adult)	190
		Restitution	211
		Cases with Fines Assessed	797
		Cases with Costs Assessed	1638
		Waived due to Indigency	201
		Fines and Costs Collected	\$219,546.87