

# JUDICIAL PROCESS COMMISSION – 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

June 25, 2007

Dear Friends,

Your support, whether given in volunteer hours or in financial assistance has helped us serve more people reentering our community than ever before. Each Monroe Community College student intern, WEP worker from the Monroe County Department of Human Services, probationer and parolee, and retiree pitched in serving as case managers, mentors, and administrative support workers. When we totaled the numbers the small contributions added up to a rather large number. Together we aided more than 1,000 parolees and probationers, doubling the amount of people served in 2006.

Sufficient staffing continues to be our main challenge. We temporarily lost AmeriCorps participants but gained one late in the fall of 2006.

With the help of a professional grant writer, we aggressively pursued local and national foundation funding. Two grants were awarded and two are pending. This has allowed us to articulate who we are and what we do in a more powerful way. I am confident that over time we will see returns for this effort.

As a result of our working relationship with Jason Hoge, many more customers will be knowledgeable about their records and employment rights. After talking with attorneys from the Reentry Project, Monroe County Legal Assistance Center (MCLAC), larger numbers of employers will understand that they cannot discriminate against those with criminal records.

As the level of excitement increases in the developing field of reentry employment law, more than a dozen Volunteer Legal Service attorneys will be trained in the fall. JPC and MCLAC have submitted a proposal to VESID to provide rap sheet and certificate services to those with records; if accepted, this could bring in additional revenue and staffing.

On a final note, office computers were upgraded to accommodate a database management system to help with evaluation and use with funding requests.

We are very grateful to you for your involvement and support. You have had a growing impact on individuals and systems in our community.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Asamoah-Wade, Esq., Chairperson

## **Vision**

The Judicial Process Commission (JPC) envisions a society with true justice and equality for all. We understand that in a just society, all institutions will be based on reconciliation and restoration, instead of retribution and violence.

## **Mission**

The JPC is a grassroots, nonprofit organization that challenges society to create a just nonviolent community which supports the right of all people to reach their fullest potential. We do this by:

- Providing support services for those involved in the criminal justice system.
- Educating the public.
- Advocating for changes in public policy.

## **Programs**

### **Probationer and Parolee Support Services, PAPSS**

Case Management – staff and volunteers provide one on one support, coordinated employment services and advocacy for individuals coming out of the criminal justice system. In 2006 we assisted 1,041 persons. Because of insufficient staff and an unworkable database (since replaced) we were only able to enter 484 customers into the computer. We were able to contact 140 customers by phone or mail to document their status. Eighty-seven percent were successful: 53% were working, 16% in school/training programs, 12% in treatment programs and 6% in supportive housing programs. Eight percent were in prison/jail and 5% were other (hospitalized or deceased).

*"Thanks for the encouragement and the landscaping resume. The day after I left your office I had a job trimming trees." Harold age 38*

*"Thank you for the resume and bus passes. I have found a good paying administrative position in business and I am very pleased. Included are some bus passes for you to give to the next participant to use." Betty age 55*

**Rap Sheets** - JPC helps individuals with criminal records to obtain their official New York State Rap Sheet from the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services. Many employers, housing providers and educational institutions are requiring individuals to disclose their criminal records and many individuals don't really know what is on their rap sheet; many rap sheets contain harmful errors.

JPC assisted customers in applying for 210 rap sheets over an 8 month period, between November 2006 and June 2007. Forty-one percent or 86 were reviewed and/or corrected; our goal is to review 100%.

**Certificate of Relief from Disabilities and Certificate of Good Conduct** - JPC case managers, legal staff and customers work together to prepare materials for judges/parole board to review and approve. If granted, a Certificate will help them gain employment, housing, or licensure.

We applied for 25 Certificates of Relief from Disabilities or Good Conduct and had 14 approved to date. Others are pending.

#### **Faith Community Adult Mentoring Project (FCAMP)**

Trained volunteer mentors are matched with parolees and probationers to help them find work and become successful taxpaying citizens. In 2006 sixty mentors were trained. There are currently twenty-seven active mentors. On average this group mentored 3 or 4 individuals a year – so 100 parolees and probationers benefited.

In 2006 and 2007 four mentors established re-entry services in their own faith communities. Their efforts to date include an ongoing mentoring program at Blessed Sacrament Church that is part of a free supper program, a support group for young women involved in the criminal justice system and a halfway house scheduled to open this fall in Rochester.

**Public Policy Group (FCAMP)** – Twelve activists met twice monthly developing strategies, fact sheets and reports pushing for more reentry resources for prisoners returning to Monroe County. This was a racially diverse group that included parolees and mentors, people directly affected by the issues, as well as citizens active in faith communities and interested in social justice and reentry issues.

Group members Precious Bedell and Bob Seidel authored a widely circulated report projecting the costs and reduced recidivism rate when providing housing, treatment and case management services to those returning from jail or prison. Dozens of educational sessions were held with elected officials. The group drafted legislation for reentry services in Monroe County for passage in Albany. **Note:** our beloved facilitator, Kris Miller Blazac, moved on and a professional facilitator is being sought so the group may continue to press for the much needed services for a marginalized and stigmatized population.

**Correspondence with local jail inmates, New York State prisoners, and prisoners from around the United States** – JPC receives complaints of abuse, discrimination, inadequate health care, reentry and legal needs. Letters also include requests for information, e.g. about the new civil commitment law for sex-offenders and addresses for advocacy groups. One-third were asking about availability of transitional services in Monroe County, including a description of JPC's services. Two-thirds requested referral information for legal services and/or governmental organizations that investigate complaints or other advocacy groups that aid prisoners with complaints of abuse, discrimination and health needs.

*"I am writing on behalf of my son who was sentenced to 90 days at a drug treatment facility. Prior to this recent incarceration he did time at Wyoming Correctional Facility and Willard. He wrote to me complaining of cruel treatment against him by a corrections guard and false accusations to extend his stay. My husband and I contacted JPC. JPC staff took action by contacting the 2 facilities and soon thereafter my son was released and the guard transferred to another facility." Warren, age unknown*

*"I believe my aunt contacted you regarding several concerns, one of them being the problem with harassment I had been receiving from an officer here. First, if you have taken any action, I would like to thank you, so thank you. The facility had been contacted by someone in Albany and the situation seems to have gone away. I was contacted by the watch commander who listened very carefully to what I had to say. Now the offending officer has to keep his distance. So far I am extremely happy with the results. Now I can serve my time in peace." Joe age 23*

### **Reconciliation Network: Don't Kill In Our Name**

This group is dedicated to abolishing the death penalty in New York State. For the past 11 years up to thirty protesters have gathered each month in front of the Hall of Justice to remember those executed in the United States and their victims. Suzanne Schnittman facilitates the monthly vigil against the death penalty and serves on the statewide group, New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty (NYADP) in Albany. She and other members of NYADP visited state legislators encouraging them to abolish capital punishment in New York. New York State's death penalty law was found unconstitutional 2 years ago but the recent deaths of three New York State troopers has reignited interest in imposing capital punishment in New York.

Reconciliation Network sadly marked the passing of founder and mentor Clare Regan in December 2006. This summer we encourage you to visit and talk with your state legislators about this issue. Watch the bi-monthly publication of **Justicia** for detailed information and updates.

### **The Virginia and John Mackey Awards**

JPC made significant progress toward creating a Mackey Leadership Award and a Mackey Training Award. The Leadership Award is for ground breaking activity in restorative, criminal, or social justice. The Training Award is for those offering or seeking training to advocate in these fields. These annual awards will be made to individuals and programs that best honor Virginia and John Mackey's vision for social justice and restorative justice. The focus will be in the Rochester region, but will be open to those elsewhere in New York. We expect to make the first announcement that solicits nominations from the public in the fall.

The awards are being made possible by a gift given to JPC by the Mackeys. John and the Reverend Virginia Mackey were outstanding advocates of criminal justice and social justice in the Greater Rochester area and beyond. In the early 1970's, in response to the serious problems in the criminal justice system and to the violent conclusion of the Attica Prison Uprising, Ginny founded JPC with Lois Davis. She also authored a major national document on **Restorative Justice: Toward Nonviolence** (1990) and was instrumental locally in founding the Task Force On Courts, the Center for Dispute Settlement, community service sentencing, merit selection of the Public Defender, and many other lasting endeavors.

**Justicia** – Our bi-monthly publication goes to 3,700 people. Writer Jack Bradigan Spula edits the newsletter. It contains articles and reports on re-entry, the death penalty, prison conditions, restorative justice, etc. This is a volunteer publication and the only one of its kind in the region.

### **What Divides Us: Understanding Our Fear of Differences Workshop –**

This workshop raises awareness about white privilege/racism utilizing videos and discussion. During the spring of 2007, this workshop was provided to 23 individuals, over nine weeks at Restart Substance Abuse Program, Catholic Family Center. Contact James Caldwell at JPC for further information.

## **Collaborative Partners:**

AmeriCorps  
Catholic Family Center  
Cephas  
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program, Monroe County Correctional Facility  
United States Probation and Pre-trial Services  
Reentry Project, Monroe County Legal Services Center  
Monroe County Reentry Project  
Monroe County Probation and Community Corrections Department  
New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty  
New York State Parole  
New York Interfaith Coalition of Advocates for Reentry and Employment

Rochester Friends Meeting  
Rochester Correctional Facility  
Safer Monroe Area Reentry Team (SMART)  
Training and Employment Assistance Program, Monroe County Department of Human Services  
VESID  
Volunteer Legal Services

## **Key Funders:**

Catholic Family Center  
Downtown United Presbyterian Church  
Fred and Floy Wilmot Foundation  
Presbytery of Genesee Valley  
Rochester Area Community Foundation  
Individuals and Faith Communities

## **Board and Staff Members**

Mary Boite, MLS (Library Services)  
JPC Reconciliation Network and JPC Personnel Committee,  
Organizational Affiliations: Co-organizer, International Human Rights Day

Jack Bradigan Spula  
Editor ***Justicia***

Laurie Hamlin  
JPC Treasurer, Employment: Computer Programmer, Monroe County Board of Elections

Shermond Johnson  
JPC Faith Community Adult Mentoring Project, FCAMP  
Mentor, Organizational Affiliations: President of Prison Ministries, Redeem Bethel Community Fellowship Center

Bob H. Jones MD, Retired  
JPC FCAMP Planning Committee and Mentor

Gail Mott  
JPC Secretary and JPC Reconciliation Network  
Organizational Affiliations: Co-organizer, International Human Rights Day and member  
Downtown United Presbyterian, Justice Ministry

John Mourning  
JPC Personnel Committee, JPC FCAMP Mentor and Planning Committee Member, Organizational Affiliations: Deacon, First Church of God, Clarissa Street

Harry Murray, PhD  
Employment: Professor of Sociology, Nazareth College

Fred Schaeffer  
JPC FCAMP Public Policy Group and Mentor  
Organizational Affiliations: Former President of Metro Justice, Employment: Retired Senior Analyst at Kodak

Suzanne Schnittman, PhD  
JPC Reconciliation Network  
Organizational Affiliations: board member  
New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty

Mary Sullivan  
Sister of Mercy, Employment: Professor Emeritus, Rochester Institute of Technology

Yolanda Wade, Esq.  
JPC Chairperson and Personnel Committee  
Employment: Monroe County Legal Aid

Valerie White-Whittick  
JPC FCAMP Mentor and Case Manager  
Organizational Affiliations: Seventh Day Adventists Personal Ministry Leader, Prison Ministry Bible Instructor and Board Member, Employment: Xerox Retiree

Louise Wu Richards  
Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School student and Peace Activist

## **Staff**

James Caldwell  
JPC Mentor Coordinator  
Associate Degree in Food Service Management  
Monroe Community College

Susan K. Porter  
JPC Coordinator, Bachelors of Science Degree, University of Michigan, Natural Resources

Kamilah Richardson  
Case Manager  
Associates Degree in Business, Bryant and Stratton

## **AmeriCorps**

Esther Rowe  
Case Manager