

# Lehigh County Juvenile Justice System Community Report

Juvenile Justice Week: October 2-8, 2005 ■ Fall 2005

## ■ Juvenile Justice Volunteers Recognized

Volunteers who participated in the Lehigh County Community Justice Panels and Collegiate Mentoring Programs were honored for their involvement at a banquet held at the Sheraton Four Points North Hotel on May 7, 2005. The affair was planned by Dwight Lichtenwalner and Todd Breinich from IMPACT, Inc., the organization that provides this program through a contract with the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department. The awards banquet was established to recognize the efforts of the work of the volunteers as well as its positive impact on the community. Dr. Joseph Abraham, Executive Director of IMPACT, Inc., provided an overview of the work done by the panelists and the mentors during the past several years.

The Community Justice Panels are comprised of individuals from the community that meet with juveniles charged with low grade crimes. Their goal is to determine the reasons the youths committed the offense and to determine appropriate consequences. Youths referred to the panels participate in community service projects and raise money for charities such as the local chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. The overall success rate for referrals accepted into the program is 83.7%.

Currently there are seven panels operating throughout Lehigh County. On average, the community justice panelists volunteer 65 hours each year. The Collegiate Mentoring Program provides one-on-one

mentoring and tutoring services for youth under the supervision of the juvenile probation department. This program was established in order to encourage youths to pursue higher education. Youths meet with their mentor nine times during each college semester, and participate in tutoring and community service projects, some of which are therapeutic in nature. The program began at Moravian College in the mid 1990s and has expanded to Lehigh Carbon Community College and Muhlenberg College.



*Panelist of the Year:  
Howard Paul*

The following awards were given at the banquet:

- **Exceptional Partner Award** – Presented to Debbie Garlicki in appreciation and recognition of her unparalleled support and commendable services to youths and communities of Lehigh County.
- **Meritorious Service Award** – Presented to the Muhlenberg College Community Service Office in appreciation and recognition of distinguished service to youths and staff of the collegiate mentoring program.

- **Extraordinary Community Service Award** – Presented to Jeff Smith, a community justice panelist from the Macungie area in recognition of his service to youths and staff of the community justice panel program.
- **Distinguished Mentor of the Year** – Presented to Jennifer Jacobi, in appreciation and recognition of her service to the collegiate mentoring programs of Lehigh County.
- **Panelist of the Year 2004** – Presented to Howard Paul from the Whitehall Community Justice Panel, in appreciation and recognition of his service to the community justice panels of Lehigh County.
- **Panel of the Year** – Presented to the Whitehall Panel in appreciation and recognition of their service to the community justice panels of Lehigh County. ■



*Panel of the Year:  
Whitehall Panel – (left to right)  
Elyse Geyer, Howard Paul  
(Panelist of the Year), Betsy  
Lichtenwalner, and Jonathan Roth.*

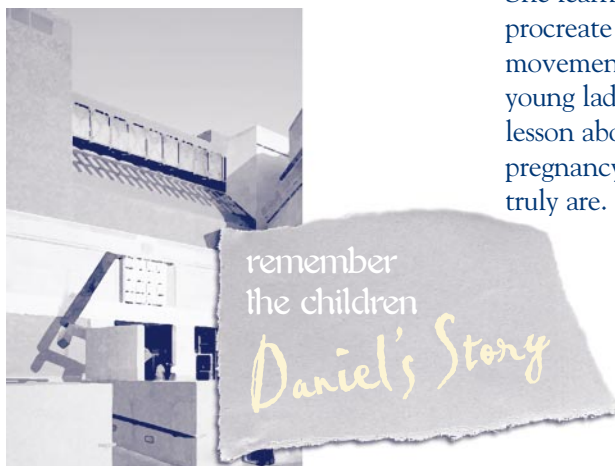
*by Andrew J. DeAngelo,  
Deputy Chief Probation Officer*

## U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Trip

Three Lehigh County Juvenile probation officers — Shannon Semmel, Tracie Ieradi, and Greg Moore — implemented a program which allowed eight probation youths to visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., on June 1, 2005.

Though the trip was made arduous by highway repairs, city traffic, and getting lost on a few occasions, the experience was still worthwhile.

Our youths were very interested in the many stories told by the survivors of the atrocities of the Holocaust. We began the tour by venturing through an exhibit titled “Daniel’s Story.” It was the account of a Jewish boy who had grown up in a clean and safe region of Germany. He enjoyed swimming and other recreational activities with his friends as well as time with his family. Daniel was bright and energetic. We toured his home which had been set up in a multi-room display with actual items from the homes of victims of the Holocaust. It was very neat and clean. We then walked through the space shown after the Nazi soldiers came into the village and separated Daniel from his parents, putting them to death. They ransacked the home, smashed the windows, and removed items of their liking.



Our youths had a chance to feel fortunate to have a life of freedom and opportunities. Even if they were of humble means, it was much better than those who suffered the injustices of this tragic ordeal.

We next followed the rise of Hitler in Germany and saw how such an evil force could lead to the destruction of families and innocent people. Not lost on our visitors were the striking similarities to the evil forces in our own communities that sell drugs, kill, extort, and negatively influence others to make poor decisions which affect families and innocent people.

Also experienced were exhibits of actual items taken from a group of Jews from a certain concentration camp including mounds of shorn hair, a huge pile of shoes, a mound of jewelry and other personal items.

We learned of the horrific medical experiments that were conducted using women (sterilization), mentally challenged adults (euthanasia), children (various medical procedures), and mass genocide. The emotional power was intense, driving some of our visitors to tears. In fact, one of our youths was pregnant, and when she learned that Jewish women were singled out and killed along with their fetuses, she was definitely impacted. She learned that a woman’s power to procreate was a threat to the Nazi movement of genocide. Thus, this young lady also learned a valuable lesson about how sacred and special pregnancy, birth, and parenthood truly are.

*A special exhibition profiling one young boy’s Holocaust experience spoke volumes to our youths about empathy and the value of personal rights.*

### **Pallbearers of Pain.**

*All in attendance were profoundly moved by families destroyed by the Holocaust.*

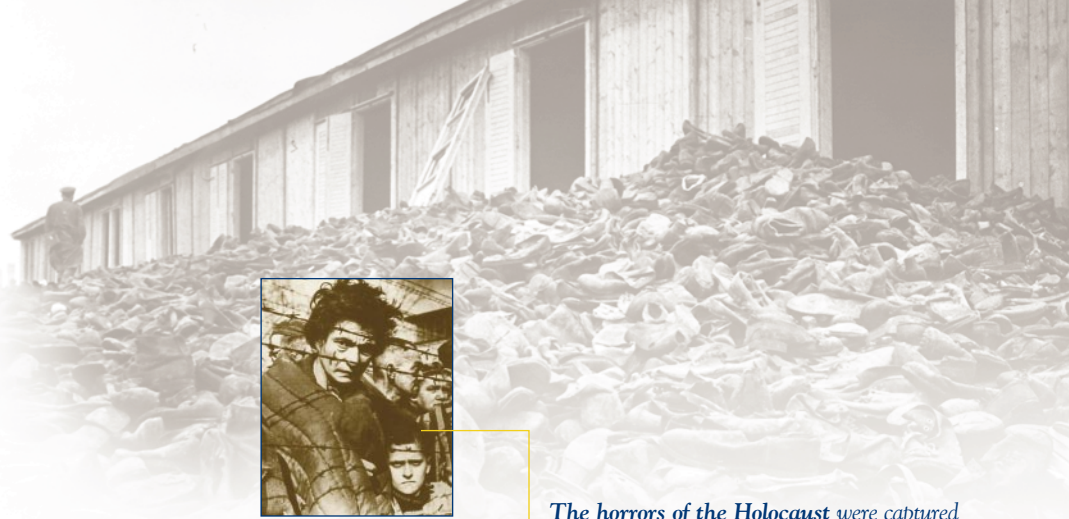
They saw the pain and suffering of the victims in the various photographs, and were able to feel the pangs of suffering and inhumanity. They also learned a valuable lesson about importance of the family unit. Many of our program’s youths do not come from traditional families. They may lack a parent or have a parent with a variety of personal issues. They were able to see how families were destroyed, separated, and generation lines extinguished. Their own family issues may appear less daunting compared to the tragedies of the Holocaust. They were also able to see how some victims were reunited with family later in life and the joy those reunions produced.

Along with the empathy of the experience, our visitors were able to see how some young people were able to persevere and overcome the cruel activities of the Holocaust. They never gave up their faith. They continued to practice their religion. They continued to follow their customs. They refused to give up their souls. Our youths understood that they too have to endure major trials in life. Given the chance to see how much the Jewish youths and adults endured was humbling and helped give their own personal challenges a valuable new perspective.

To further embed the experience, the probationers were instructed to submit essays answering the following four questions:

1. Share five new things that you learned while exploring the Holocaust Museum.
2. Share your feelings on how the Jewish adults were affected by events of the Holocaust.
3. Share your feelings on how the Jewish children were affected by events of the Holocaust.
4. Share the struggles that the Jews suffered and then how we can learn from the Holocaust so that it never happens again.

The youths submitted some very powerful responses to the writing assignment. One of them, who is of German descent, said he was “ashamed that the people of his country could have participated in such an event,” and then made the following remarks in his writing assignment: “For this (Holocaust)



*The horrors of the Holocaust were captured in images of victims and piles of their possessions, like the shoes shown in the background.*

to not happen again, we have to learn that everyone is equal in society.” It was gratifying to learn that there are young people with the capacity for charity and concern for the welfare of all people.

Another youth summed up what I hope the others gained from the tour and experience: “We should be happy that at least we have rights.”

Through this experience they were able to understand that they have rights to be protected. Rights to the pursuit of happiness, rights to help others build a strong community, and rights to freedom and justice.

Our fervent hope is that by understanding these rights they will value the decisions they make and

how they impact their personal lives, the lives of victims, the lives of their family and friends, and the life of the community.

The overall lesson learned from the Holocaust Memorial Museum visit was that even this horrific event could not kill human spirit bolstered by perseverance, determination, and faith. These are the qualities they must develop to make necessary changes in their own young lives, and they were made most evident by the humanity that was victimized by the Holocaust. ■

*by Greg Moore,  
Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Officer*



## Mission of the Juvenile Justice System

*“Juvenile Justice: Community Protection, Victim Restoration, Youth Redemption.”*

**Community Protection** refers to the right of all Pennsylvania citizens to be and feel safe from crime.

**Victim Restoration** emphasizes that, in Pennsylvania, a juvenile who commits a crime harms the victim of the crime and the community, and thereby incurs an obligation to repair that harm to the greatest extent possible.

**Youth Redemption** embodies the belief that juvenile offenders in Pennsylvania have strengths, are capable of change, can earn redemption, and can become responsible and productive members of their community.

**Furthermore**, all of the services designed and implemented to achieve this mission and all hearings and decisions under the Juvenile Act — indeed all aspects of the juvenile justice system — must be provided in a fair and unbiased manner. The United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions guarantee rights and privileges to all citizens, regardless of race, color, creed, gender, national origin or handicap.

## North Street Clean-Up Project

This community service project began in February, 2005 with a call to Dave Evans, head of the Housing Association and Development Corporation. His organization works in Allentown with the goal of purchasing homes that are highly neglected or boarded up. They remodel these blighted properties and sell them to low income home seekers. In May, I met with him again to create a plan of action for cleaning up homes in the 400 block of North Street in Allentown that were devastated by fire in September 2004. Five homes were burned down. Another six homes remained standing, but were deemed uninhabitable. Four of those six homes had all the previous owners' furniture, personal items, appliances, and much more inside. Beginning in July, several juvenile community service work crews began caring for the yards of the homes by removing fencing, and cutting weeds and grass. On August 3, sixteen juveniles with nine probation department staff started to remove all the items that were left inside the homes.

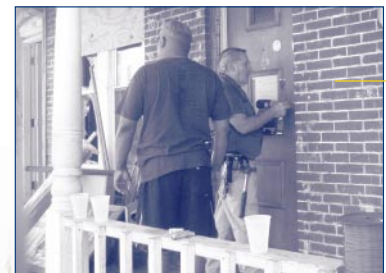


*From burnout to brand new, the North Street Project will raze the blighted properties and build new homes on the site. Our teams were instrumental in preparing the properties for the demolition stage.*

By 1:00 p.m. an entire dumpster was full. The crew was able to locate and salvage many personal items such as photo albums, military certificates and other miscellaneous items which the previous owners will be contacted to claim. A neighbor who was interviewed by a local television news station said it was great to see so much work being done. On August 4, a crew of eight juveniles and four department work crew supervisors filled another dumpster and by the end of the week a total of three dumpsters were filled. The houses are now ready for the next step, which is demolition. Our youths will work

closely with an experienced construction supervisor to remove drywall until all the walls and ceiling have studs exposed. Once the houses are demolished new home construction will begin. Currently the plans include nine homes to be built and a small park. ■

*by Ryan Schaffer, Director,  
Community Alternative Work Service Program*



*Before the burnt homes could be demolished, they had to be cleared of all personal items and have all drywall and ceilings removed. Our staffers and youth teams provided the help to make this happen.*

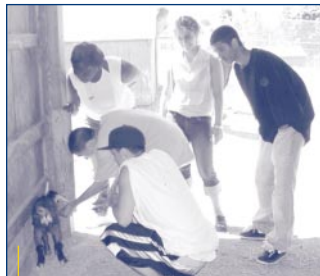


## ■ Getting Closer to Nature

On a June morning, six youths, three probation professionals — Patrick Best, Sue Sedora, and Eva Frederick — piled into two vans to take a trip into the country to learn a little more about the beauty of nature and the need for conservation. Our destination that morning was the Lake Tobias Wildlife Park in Halifax, PA. We began the day with a list of expectations and ended it being pleasantly surprised how a day of fresh air and close contact with animals could produce unexpected reactions in our youths. Even before the vans left the parking lot, we were hit with a barrage of questions on what animals they would see living at the park. They found out that we were going to see exotic animals from over six continents and have the opportunity to handfeed many of them. We heard over and over, “I’m not touching them!” Little did they know that an hour and a half later, the animals of Lake Tobias would change minds and calm fears.

The petting zoo, one of their favorite attractions, offered the experience to handfeed African

pygmy goats, long-necked llamas, deer, a camel and many other friendly creatures. The youths entered with some hesitance but as the animals greeted them at the gate they quickly became comfortable engaging them with food. Soon after entering, all of the youths congregated around one goat, which kept butting its head into a corner of a shelter. Several described it as shy, scared, and lonely. Because we didn’t have an answer to their question as to why it was isolating itself, one of the youths came to her own conclusion that it must have been bullied. Who would have ever thought that one little goat would spur a discussion on bullying.



*One shy little goat became a favorite with the group.*

The ostriches, zebras, snow leopards and many other interesting creatures seen on the walking tour spurred their curiosity to learn more about the beauty of nature. As we toured the fifty acres of the zoo-like setting, we heard more than once an utterance of “I never saw one of them before except on T.V.” Through reading the plaques posted at each habitat they identified each of the animals, whether they be caged, swimming in one of the stream-fed lakes or freely roaming the park. Their desire to learn even more led them to pose questions to animal keepers, especially after being entertained by an eye-opening presentation in the Reptile Building.

A memorable highlight of this trip was the wild safari tour, which took us across one hundred fifty acres of rolling hillsides. As we rode in special



*Definitely not TV’s “Animal Planet,” the trip to Lake Tobias Wildlife Park was an opportunity for urban youths to witness the real deal.*

safari cruisers, we were amazed at how close we were to herds of deer and elk, some numbering over five hundred. At each stop along the tour, the animals strolled right up to the open cruisers and craned their heads over the armrests, begging to be fed. Faces were left amazed by this close contact. On the ride to the park one youth was emphatic that she was absolutely not going to touch any of the animals, yet later in an essay she commented that she, “was upset because some of the animals weren’t coming next to us. It was a great experience for me, I have never been to something like that. It was so amazing to see so many different animals that I have never seen before. What’s more amazing is how I got to get so close to them and feed them.”

This adventure in nature, which was funded through the Project Safe Neighborhood Grant, generated an interest in animals which we hope will continue to grow in our youths. As commented by one: “I’m glad that I went on this trip. It’s something different to be in the country and see different things.” She further shared that the experiences from this day reinforce her dream of teaching science to elementary school students. ■

*by Eva Frederick, Assistant Director, Community Alternative Work Service Program*

*Whether furry, feathered or finned, making new friends was the order of the day for both youth group and probation office staff.*



**Lehigh County  
Juvenile Probation Department**  
455 W. Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101

## Community Report

### Building Empathy for Victims and the Community

“Whom did your crime affect?” That is the key question frequently asked by probation officers of youth on their caseloads, especially in the group setting of a Victim/Community Awareness Class. The classes use an empathy-driven curriculum written by Valerie Bender for the Center for Victims of Violent Crime under a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. It is designed to address the offenders’ accountability for their crimes and educates them on how they can repair the harm they have caused to victims and community. Through lectures, role plays, worksheets and group processing, offenders are asked to identify who

their crime has impacted so they can begin the process of reparation.

The “Name, Faces and Hearts” portion of the Victim/Awareness Curriculum is a valuable tool in helping our youth realize that victims are real people with deep emotions. No matter what their offense may be, we strive to help offenders realize that their crimes’ impact may be greater and longer lasting than they originally thought. Through the curriculum, we ask them to explore how victims and their families can be affected on a physical, emotional and financial level. Means to restore a victim are identified and oftentimes go beyond apology letters, paying restitution, community service and mediation. Through group discussion we have participants identify how the quality of life for community members is affected by juvenile crime. The outcome we hope to achieve is that juvenile offenders recognize the harm that they have caused, work to repair it and, in the future, engage in activities which improve their community rather than damaging it by committing more crimes. ■

*by Eva Frederick, Assistant Director,  
Community Alternative Work Service Program*



*Making offenders realize the impact of their crimes is key to the Victim/Community Awareness Classes.*

### Special Events Planned for Juvenile Justice Week

During the week of October 2-8, Juvenile Justice Week will be celebrated in PA. A proclamation citing the work of the Juvenile Justice System will be issued by Governor Rendell in commemoration of this event. Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department will also have public awareness activities scheduled.

Community involvement is always appreciated. If you are interested in volunteering to work with our youths as a mentor or tutor, to provide a community work service site, or to schedule a representative from the Juvenile Probation Department to speak to your organization, please contact:

**The Lehigh County  
Juvenile Probation Department  
610-782-3143**

**Andrew J. DeAngelo,  
Deputy Chief Probation Officer**