



Westmoreland County *Community Report*

The Mission of the Westmoreland County Juvenile Justice System

*"To provide supervision
and rehabilitation to youth
and families while providing community
protection, victim restoration
and youth redemption."*



**Westmoreland County Juvenile Court
Administrative Judge
The Honorable Michele G. Bononi**

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Message from the Director

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“The Juvenile Probation Department of Westmoreland County has the unique and critical responsibility of shaping young lives as well as addressing and serving the needs of victim’s communities. This community report gives us an opportunity to share the exciting and innovative work that has been accomplished by our group of dedicated probation officers and support staff in the last year.”

One of the most significant changes that occurred this year was the appointment of a new Administrative Judge, the Honorable Michele Bononi to Westmoreland County Juvenile Court. Judge Bononi serves as the only Juvenile Court Judge in Westmoreland County. This year was a busy one for us as we began to move in a direction that utilizes evidence based practices in order to enhance the Westmoreland County Juvenile Justice System. Through legislation, the purpose clause of Pennsylvania’s Juvenile Act now contains language that requires employing evidence-based practices whenever possible throughout the system. Evidence-based practice simply means “applying what we know in terms of research to what we do in our work with youth, their families, and the communities in which we live.” In order to fulfill our mission “to provide supervision and rehabilitation to youth and families while providing Community Protection, Victim Restoration and Youth Redemption” our department continues to implement programs and protocols that move us in that direction. We are working to engage and involve families whose children are involved in juvenile court in a much more meaningful way. When children are involved with juvenile justice, the involvement of families is critical to a successful outcome. Westmoreland County’s goal is to use evidence-based strategies and services that support the family role. We have made a commitment to continue our pledge and partner with communities to improve prevention and diversion services. Our department recognizes that we must take every opportunity to involve our families in the development of a case plan for their child involved in the Juvenile Justice System.

We use a Risk-Needs Assessment Instrument for all youth who enter the Westmoreland County’s Juvenile Justice System. It is designed to assist our officers to make structured and consistent decisions. The results are used to develop a more comprehensive case plan for juveniles that focus on reducing identified risk factors and emphasizing youth’s strengths.

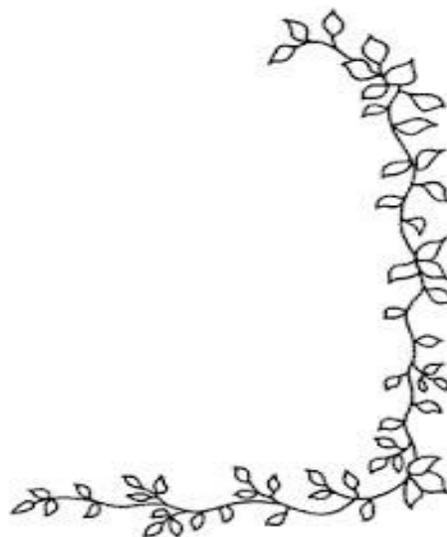
Research shows that youth whose services are matched with the correct interventions based on their needs assessment will have better outcomes and the recidivism rate of that youth will be decreased. Our sub-office in New Kensington, PA is in full operation and we continue to conduct intake interviews, meet with families and community agencies and utilize that facility daily. This office is a convenience to families and communities in the northern part of the county.

Bridges out of Poverty continues to be a major initiative and our staff works diligently in Westmoreland County communities to ensure its success. Our commitment to this is strong and staff is continuously encouraged to participate and enhance its mission which has forced us to understand poverty and how to better connect with people in poverty. The specific training details solutions that organizations can implement such as increasing knowledge of cultural differences and illustrating how it impacts situations and opportunities and increasing the likelihood of moving from welfare to work.

Our Community Involvement Workgroup continues to seek ways to partner and expand the concepts and principles of a Balanced & Restorative Justice System in communities and develop strategies that will increase positive outcomes for all those involved. We are continually exploring ways in which our department may reach people in communities in positive ways.

Sincerely,

*Addie Beighley
Westmoreland County
Director, Juvenile Probation*



Introducing The Honorable Michele G. Bononi...



Michele G. Bononi currently sits as a Judge for the Court of Common Pleas in Westmoreland County. She serves as Administrative Judge for both the Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions. Prior to this she was a founding partner of Bononi & Bononi, P.C., a Greensburg law firm, as well as a Hearing Officer in the Family Division/Domestic Relations for the Westmoreland Court of Common Pleas.

Judge Bononi began her career by obtaining a degree in psychology where she graduated magna cum laude from Seton Hall University. She earned her juris doctorate from Claude A. Pettit School of Law at Ohio Northern University. She is admitted to practice law in both the State of New Jersey and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Following graduation, she worked with Dato, Ippolito and Carracino, Attorneys at Law and Juman & Juman, Attorneys a Law, where she specialized in civil litigation, specifically Plaintiff's personal injury law. After relocating to the Greensburg region, she worked for Thomas Livingston and Associates in Pittsburgh, a criminal defense firm before establishing Bononi & Bononi, P.C., where she specialized in family law. Judge Bononi previously served as a solicitor for Overly's Country Christmas and provided legal services to several non-profit organizations.

Her community service work includes sitting as treasurer for Case Management and Supports, Inc., serving on the board of the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Bar Association's executive board for the Women in the Legal Profession.

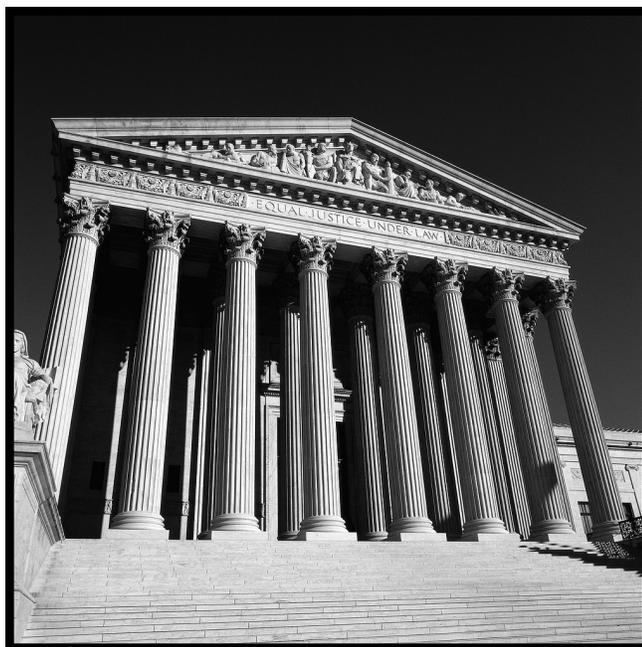
She is past board president of the Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Commission and past board vice president of the Health and Welfare Council, past president and treasurer of Laurel Legal Services, Inc. She has also served on the boards of the Alzheimer's Association, Greensburg Rotary, the Girl Scout Council and the advisory board for the Pa. Bar Association Family Law Committee.

Judge Bononi is a past recipient of the Community Service award from the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce, a Paul Harris Fellow award from Rotary International, named as one of the 50 Best Women in Business in Pennsylvania, the Woman of Distinction Award from the Girl Scouts, and the Juvenile Court Judge's Commission.

The Judge is a member of the Westmoreland and Pennsylvania Bar Associations, the Westmoreland Cultural Trust, the YWCA, the American Heart Association, the Westmoreland Commission for Women and Families, the United Way's Leadership Council for Women, and the Blackburn Center.

Judge Bononi has lectured on family law issues for the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Westmoreland Bar Association, the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and the Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania.

She resides in Unity Township with her husband, Eric. They have one daughter who is currently attending law school at Florida Coastal School of Law.



The Victim Witness Advocate

Until May of 2012, victims involved in the juvenile court system were often overlooked, as much of the attention was given to the juvenile defendant in a case. Victims were often seen sitting in the waiting area near their offender looking angry, frightened, or confused as to what would be occurring. It was almost as if they were being re-victimized in an environment where they should have felt safe. That year, the Westmoreland County Juvenile Office, recognizing some of the above-mentioned shortcomings of the judicial process, appointed a probation officer to be a Victim Advocate. This advocate is to orient the victim to the work and objectives of the juvenile justice system. The victim's input and concerns are strongly encouraged throughout the entire hearing process, giving them a feeling of empowerment. In the past, victims were not summoned to appear at the juvenile's Detention Hearing and now, they are invited to attend.

In addition, prior to Pre-Adjudication Conferences, the victim advocate will make every effort to speak with the victim to receive their input. Perhaps the victim would like to have the juvenile ordered to perform some community service work, seek counseling, have no contact with them, and /or pay restitution to them. They are often asked whether they would object to having the charges reduced to a lesser offense or if they are in agreement with the juvenile being placed on a Consent Decree. On hearing days, before the court master, the Victim Advocate escorts the victims to our special Victim Waiting Room to separate them from the juvenile offender. It is there that the Advocate, often with an assistant district attorney, discusses the case, explains their role in the hearing, and clarifies any questions the victim may have. In the court room, the Advocate accompanies the victim to give support during the proceeding. If a juvenile is placed in a juvenile facility, the victim is empowered by having the option to receive regular notification of how that juvenile is progressing, when consideration is being made for a temporary home pass, and finally, when the juvenile is going to be released from custody. During the summer, our juveniles were provided with the opportunity to earn money through the Private Industry Council. It was a program to assist juveniles in earning restitution by working at a local non-profit jobsite. The program would also teach the youth how to compose a skills resume and how to search for employment in the future. With the addition of the Victim Advocate for the court master hearings, the victims now have a better understanding of their role in the process along with an ongoing opportunity for input.

*The Victim Advocate can be contacted at 724-830-4221 or e-mailed at
MANTON@CO.WESTMORELAND.PA.US*

Family Involvement

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The Family Involvement workgroup meets regularly to develop plans that will enhance family engagement. They have developed a parent satisfaction survey that is to be completed upon a case being closed. The workgroup will use the information gathered to develop a better understanding of how our families feel about the services that we provide. Additionally, this survey will enable us to expand our efforts toward providing families with client-centered quality care in all phases of the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing is a communication skill that provides guidance to assist probation officers with the way they interact with their clients. It teaches them how to explore and help resolve clients' ambivalence to change and centers on motivational processes within individuals that facilitate change. Three Probation Officers have been certified as Motivational Interviewing Coaches. They are offering ongoing trainings and guidance to all Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation Officers. Motivational Interviewing serves to increase the probation officer's skill and ability to communicate with the juvenile offender and their families. The overall intent is to collaborate with our clients and to help them meet their goals while adhering to the order of court.

For further information please contact Tracy Cremonese at (724) 830-4200



The Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Project

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This project has been in existence for 13 years. It was originally funded as a means of improving services to females in the juvenile justice system, As it progressed, the project demonstrated great success with its Residential Treatment Curriculum, a group cycle that helps residents (now addressing males as well) of juvenile facilities understand and work through trauma. The project continues to train new facilitators.

We also offer a number of other training programs on PTSD and Stress, Since 2010 we have been funded through the state budget to continue the work of training juvenile system workers to understand trauma, stress, PTSD, and other mental health issues.

These are exciting times as we update all of our materials in response to new advances in trauma research, Further, we are developing new curricula in response to participant feedback, and are working to expand our presence in social media.

Please check the website for current offerings. We are partnering to help bring Crisis Intervention Team training to police, continuing our work to address conditions of poverty in the community, and looking forward to using technology to our advantage to promote awareness, understanding and appropriate treatment of PTSD.

*To arrange a presentations, or make further inquiries, please contact
Kristine Demnovich at 724) 830-1815, or
kdemnovi@co.westmoreland.pa.us*



Pennsylvania's Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Project

Highlights of 2012

- φ PTSD Aftercare continues into its fourth year of service
- φ PTSD Project continues to be funded through the Needs Based Budget.

SNAPSHOT

Pennsylvania Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Project

8 Local & National Awards

87 Agencies Trained
In 2012

1088
Professionals
Trained in 2012

Over **6,300** Adolescents
Served

6 Training Curricula Offered

459 Residential treatment
Curriculum
Facilitators trained.

More than
150 Agencies
other than
Juvenile Justice
Trained

36 Mental
Health Facilities

14 years of the Project

10 years Grant Funded

Currently funded by
Needs Based Budget

Only **1** PTSD Aftercare Program
in the State

8 Sessions in the
Aftercare Curriculum

125 Adolescents Completed
PTSD Aftercare Curriculum

For further information contact Kristine Demnovich, PTSD Project Coordinator, at 724-830-1815 or via email kdemnovi@co.westmoreland.pa.us

Community Service Work



The Westmoreland County CSW Program provides clients with several opportunities to learn, grow, and the serve the community while fulfilling their court ordered obligations.

*Early 2012, saw the end of another successful season with **Overly's Country Christmas**. Since 1994, the Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation Department has worked with **Overly's Country Christmas**. Enabling youth to learn team building and life skills. This helps our troubled youth give back and help provide holiday memories and traditions to everyone in the community. This is a major charitable fundraiser that benefits children's causes.*

*Overly's is a nationally recognized holiday light display that has been featured on "Good Morning America" and other **ABC, NBC, and CBS** affiliated television programs. In 1983, Good Housekeeping Magazine named **Overly's Country Christmas** one of America's Best Outdoor Light Displays. The display features 2.4 million twinkling lights covering 15 acres of the Westmoreland Fairgrounds.*

In preparation of the holiday season, youth were able to provide Overly's a great deal of assistance hanging Christmas lights and splitting firewood. During the season some of our probationers help prepare and serve the food. The most popular treat is hot cocoa! Also, throughout the year juveniles help the Westmoreland County Food Bank by packaging food items for the CSFB (Commodity Supplemental Food Program) benefiting Seniors over the age of 60 and WIC (Women Infants and Children) participants. As the weather warmed, numerous opportunities became available assisting local communities throughout the county. Areas served include Irwin Borough, Mt. Pleasant Borough, the City of Jeanette , the City of New Kensington and many independent sites such as St. Vincent College , the Salvation Army, churches, libraries, and volunteer fire departments throughout the county.

In 2012 approximately 7,000 hours of CSW were completed. We will continue to work hard to provide services to our current sites while seeing new agencies in which to work. We will strive to offer meaningful learning experiences to all our juvenile clients.

**For more information please contact Anthony Cremonese
Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation Community Service Officer at
(724) 830-4200**

Youth Commission

More than 40 years ago, the first Youth Commission was established in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. Over the past decade, the Westmoreland County Juvenile Court has been recognized as having the oldest Youth Commission Program in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Youth Commission is an arm of the Court System and follows the mission and goals of the Juvenile Justice System. The purpose is to provide a community the opportunity to assist in helping youth adjust, work out, and solve problems within their own neighborhoods. Thus, the youth assigned to a local commission would have a better chance for readjustment and treatment and would be more likely to conform to the laws and rules of society because of the relationships developed between all of the concerned parties.

The Youth Commission allows community members the opportunity to volunteer to assist the Court and help young people to achieve the goals of competency development and accountability, which along with victim restoration is called Balanced and Restorative Justice, and is the guiding mission of the Juvenile Court in Pennsylvania. It is believed that the Youth Commission provides, in the community, a local diversionary program that would more closely supervise a young person than any agency could utilize through one central office. The youth commission is comprised of dedicated community volunteers who provide better opportunities for learning, readjusting, and conforming to the laws of society. It is also charged with helping the youth take responsibility for his/her actions and repair the harm caused to the victims and/or community. It has been the experience of the Westmoreland County Juvenile Court that the commission does show objectivity in arriving at a disposition that makes certain there is substantial justice between the community and the troubled youth.

Youth who are eligible for referral to the Youth Commission, can be referred either by the District Court, or the Juvenile Court. Offenses eligible for referral are summary offenses from District Court, and misdemeanor offenses from Juvenile Court. Youth involved must take responsibility for the offense prior to being referred to the Youth Commission.



*The commission does not have the authority of the Court, but works closely with staff at the Juvenile Probation Department, who provide guidance and advice when necessary. The Juvenile Probation Department also provides training for the Youth Commissions and endeavors to visit each commission site at least once per calendar year. In the past year training for the Youth Commissions has included an annual forum held at the Community College, as well as **Bridges Out Poverty** training held at the probation office, and a panel discussion held at Kiski High School in regard to underage drinking. The **Bridges out of Poverty** training is designed to help community members understand hidden rules of class and cultural that will enhance their ability to work with youth from different socio-economic classes. The underage drinking training at Kiski High School was a panel discussion which included the area magisterial district justice, the local police chief, and a young person who was involved in a death during a driving under the influence accident.*

At the present time, there are 17 youth commissions with a total of 120 members in all. The commissions cover all of the county school districts and are as follows: Burrell Youth Commission covering the Lower and Upper Burrell Communities and school district; Derry Youth Commission covering Derry Borough, Derry Township and New Alexandria; Greensburg Salem Youth Commission covering the City of Greensburg, the Boroughs of South and Southwest Greensburg, and Salem Township; Franklin Regional Youth Commission, covering the communities of Export, Murrysville and Delmont; Hempfield Township Youth Commission, covering the entire Hempfield Area School District including all of the municipalities located within; Jeannette Youth Commission, covering the City of Jeannette; Kiski Area Youth Commission, covering the communities of Vandergrift, East Vandergrift, Washington, Bell and Allegheny Townships, Avonmore, Oklahoma, Hyde Park and West Leechburg, the Latrobe Youth Commission covering Latrobe Borough and Unity Township; Ligonier Valley Youth Commission covering Ligonier Borough and Ligonier Township; Monessen Youth Commission covering the City of Monessen, the Mt. Pleasant/Southmoreland Youth Commission covering the Boroughs of Mt. Pleasant and Scottdale, and Mt. Pleasant and East Huntingdon Townships; New Ken Arnold Youth Commission covering the cities of New Kensington and Arnold; the Norwin Area Youth Commission covering North Huntingdon Township and the Boroughs of Irwin and North Irwin, Penn Township Youth Commission covering all of Penn Township;

Trafford Youth Commission covering Trafford Borough; the Rostraver/ North Belle Vernon Youth Commission covering Rostraver Township and the Borough of North Belle Vernon, and the Yough Youth Commission covering the Boroughs of Madison, Arona, Smithton, Sutersville, West Newton, and South Huntingdon and Sewickley Townships.

Adults interested in volunteering for the Youth Commission should contact Michael Sturnick, Probation Officer III at 724-830-4211, or an application can be accessed and submitted through the internet at

<http://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/juvenile/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=634882&juvenileNav=/> Should the address not work in your web browser, the Youth Commission Application is located in sidebar menu of the Juvenile Court page labeled Volunteer Opportunities. It should be noted that applicants will be required to obtain Act 33 and 34 Clearances, and will also have an interview with a Juvenile Court Staff Youth Commission Liaison prior to being accepted as a member. It should be noted that prospective members should apply to serve on the commission located in the area in which they reside.

REFERENCES



*Payne, Ruby K., Phd., Devol, Philip E, Dreussi Smith, Terie, (2009). **Bridges Out of Poverty:***

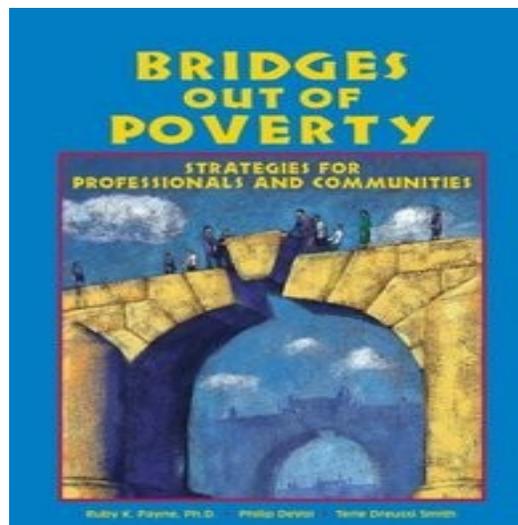
***The Trip Lens. Strategies for Professionals and Communities.** Two day licensed training and text book. Highlands TX: aha! Process, Inc.*

Bridges Out of Poverty

Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation

Named As Community Champion

*The Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation Department has partnered with Westmoreland Community Action to bring **the Circles Initiative** to several communities in Westmoreland County. As a grassroots effort, members look at personal and community issues that need to be addressed to eradicate poverty. The original site, Jeannette, has been operating for 6 years and has been able to obtain a grant from the Jeannette Initiative to start a community garden and a Farmers Market. Westmoreland Community Action has also obtained funding to begin building a center that includes a laundromat, commercial kitchen, and greenhouse. New sites were started in the past year in New Kensington and Latrobe; juvenile probation staff has been active in all aspects of the project. One team member is also a certified Bridges Out of Poverty trainer; the Juvenile Probation Department will periodically offer training in the community and at the center.*



Westmoreland County Juvenile Probation Outcomes
**Statistical data
 contained in this
 report reflects
 cases closed in 2012**
Community Protection



The public has a right to a safe and secure community,
 including protection from known offenders

267 cases or 81% of Juvenile Offenders Successfully Completed
 Supervision

240 cases or 73% of Juvenile Offenders Complied with their
 Conditions of Supervision

Competency Development

Offenders should leave the Juvenile Justice System more
 capable of being responsible and productive members of
 their communities

80% of juveniles were employed or in an educational or
 vocational activity

97% of juveniles successfully completed a competency
 development activity

Accountability

90 % of juveniles completed assigned community service
 obligations

8,144 hours of
 community service were completed

\$63,020 of restitution was paid to victims

86% of juveniles made full restitution to their victim(s)

MISSION STATEMENT

OF

Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System

“Pennsylvania’s vision for the future of juvenile justice is one that involves every community; assists all victims; supports all families; and helps all juveniles to become responsible citizens.”

**“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 communities.

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.



For Further Information Please Contact:

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