

# **Mercyhurst College Civic Institute**



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2003-2004**

**Mercyhurst College**  
***Civic Institute***

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## **I. Civic Institute Mission Statement**

The Mercyhurst Civic Institute is a college-community partnership dedicated to the social, health, educational, and civic well being of the Erie region and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Its purposes are:

- Providing high quality objective information to inform local decision making.
- Convening community forums that encourage reasoned reflection and free and open discussion of regional issues.
- Educating the Erie community about various issues through Institute reports and publications.
- Fostering human networks that enhance communication, link resources, strengthen community participation and build social capital.
- Providing research, policy development and learning opportunities for the Mercyhurst community.

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## **Oath of the Athenian City State**

**“We will strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city,  
both alone and with many;  
we will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty;  
we will revere and obey the city’s laws;  
we will transmit this city not only not less,  
but greater, better and more beautiful  
than it was transmitted to us”**

## **II. Director’s Letter**

The Mercyhurst College Civic Institute was founded by President William Garvey with one simple direction: Use the resources of the college to provide evidence based knowledge and state of the art tools to improve the well-being of the community. The services included in this direction include research, evaluation, facilitation, training, presentations, coordination and planning.

In 1997, Dr. Thomas Gamble, former director of the Erie County Office of Children and Youth and previously the Edmund L. Thomas Juvenile Detention Center, was named the director of the Institute. Under Dr. Gamble, the Institute flourished and became one of the premier consulting organizations in the Commonwealth. In July of 2003, the Institute experienced another change as this writer was named the director when Dr. Gamble assumed the position of Vice-President of Academic Affairs. While Dr. Gamble can never be adequately replaced, his positive influence and mentorship continue to shape the mission of the Institute and ultimately benefit the community that is served by its efforts.

Also worthy of mention is the fact that long time administrative assistant, Ms. Sue Johnson, left the Institute to assist Dr. Gamble in his present position. Ms. Johnson's dedication to duty and attention to detail will be sorely missed. Nevertheless, the Institute's work marches on and Ms. Johnson's duties are now being handled by Ms. Shelley Thayer, a capable and devoted Mercyhurst College employee who formerly worked in the Registrar's Office.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that Research Analyst Mark Beary was added to the staff during this past year to replace Ms. Emily Reitenbach. Mr. Beary is involved in the college's highly touted Forensic Anthropology Program and brings with him skills learned through the repeated use of scientific methodology.

During the last fiscal year, the Institute accomplished many remarkable tasks and forged several new directions. One new direction was to establish partnerships with state and county agencies across Pennsylvania, as well as maintaining strong ties with long time supporters in Erie County and the surrounding region. Thus, our definition of "community" is constantly being rewritten as we bend and shape to fulfill the needs of our clients. All of these projects and accomplishments are contained within this report and can be read by the reader at his/her leisure. It is remarkable, however, when considering all the work accomplished by the Civic Institute that this small component of Mercyhurst College only employs five full time staff members. For this writer, the past year has presented the opportunity and privilege to work beside these professionals and to constantly be in awe of their intellect and devotion to service in the community.

Arthur C. Amann, Ed.D.  
Director

### **III. Organizational Structure and Staffing**

The interdisciplinary staff has extensive experience in health and human services management, criminal and juvenile justice, research methods, program evaluation, data analysis, grant writing, strategic planning, and community relations.

- \* **Arthur C. Amann, Ed.D.**, earned a doctorate in higher education leadership and a master's degree in criminal justice. Dr. Amann has extensive experience in the criminal justice system and is the former warden and chief adult probation/parole officer in Erie County. He is also a former member of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and currently chairs the Court and Corrections Subcommittee for this organization. In addition to his work with the Civic Institute, Dr. Amann is a faculty member in the Mercyhurst College Criminal Justice Program.
- \* **Mark O. Beary**, Research Analyst, is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Anthropology in Forensic Anthropology from Mercyhurst College. His areas of expertise include adult and juvenile drug courts, treatment courts, and criminal justice advisory boards.
- \* **Amy Danzer**, Research Analyst, received her Masters Degree in Psychology from Princeton University. Her areas of expertise include policy analysis, grant writing and proposal design, as well as resource identification, neighborhood revitalization and early childhood programming. She is also an expert in compiling, analyzing and presenting census data.
- \* **Amy C. Eisert**, Research Analyst, received her Masters Degree in Administration of Justice from Mercyhurst College. Her areas of expertise include: juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice, research methodology, data collection, grant management and program evaluation.
- \* **Shelley Thayer**, Administrative Assistant, oversees database management, website management, as well as budget accountability.

During 2003-2004, the *Civic Institute* utilized the expertise of several consultants to assist with a variety of projects and they are as follows: Erika Brown, Tim Maloney, Julie Bush-Miller, Atty. Tina Fryling, Paul Gambill, Shannon Glennon, Bill Hale, Dr. Paul Kovacs, Laura Lewis, Stan Rockovich, Dave Rockwell, Sister Maura Smith, Sherrie Sonnenberg, and John Villa. The *Civic Institute* also has graduate and undergraduate students assisting in projects.

#### **IV. Grants Prepared and Received**

##### ***Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG)***

On behalf of the Erie County Department of Human Services, the *Civic Institute* prepared and in April 2004, received a sixth year of funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Erie County was awarded \$117,143 to continue a juvenile crime reduction plan. The plan includes: (1) reducing the influx of juveniles entering juvenile probation with allegations of "failure to comply" sentences; (2) reducing the overcrowding problem in the secure detention program at the Edmund L. Thomas Adolescent Center and improving the efficiency of the court by utilizing teleconferencing to conduct detention and review hearings for juvenile offenders; (3) improving the coordination and communication between the City of Erie Bureau of Police and other

agencies in an attempt to gather and share information on truancy and gang related activity; and (4) to support production of a special report on juvenile crime trends in Erie County.

***Erie County Mental Health Screening & Assessment Demonstration Project***

On behalf of the Erie County Department of Human Services, the Civic Institute prepared and in July 2003, received a grant for the Screening and Assessment Demonstration Project. Erie County was awarded \$300,000 for two years from the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The Screening and Assessment Service provides screening and assessment services by two Master's level professionals (Level of Care Coordinators) for children and youth admitted to the Edmund L. Thomas Detention Center and Dependent Shelter, Hermitage House Emergency Shelter and Perseus House Emergency Shelter. The intent of the Service is to identify mental health and/or substance abuse concerns as early as possible, and to promote treatment for the child or youth as early as possible.

***Family Service System Reform Grant***

On behalf of the Erie County Department of Human Services, the Civic Institute prepared, and in January of 2004, received an additional year and a half of funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Erie County was awarded \$118,115 over an 18 month period to support the Family Group Decision Making and Healthy Youth Development Projects.

***Pennsylvania Attorney General's Community Drug Abuse Prevention Grant***

The Civic Institute prepared and received a \$1,500 grant from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office in May 2004 to fund a community presentation on methamphetamines addiction and treatment with S. Alex Stalcup, M.D. The program was offered for all professional and public communities in Northwestern Pennsylvania to enhance awareness and knowledge pertaining to use and abuse of methamphetamines and related drugs.

***Enhancing Education Through Technology Grant (EETT)***

The Civic Institute assisted the Erie School District in preparing the EETT grant which will allow for increased access to technology by students, the purchase of math and language arts software which will provide individualized instruction and training to teachers on the effective use of infusing technology throughout the curriculum. The \$340,000 grant was awarded to the school district for implementation from 2004-2005 through the 2006-2007 school years. The Civic Institute will be conducting the local evaluation of the program as well as assisting in the state-wide evaluation.

***Erie County Criminal Justice Coalition Planning Grant***

The Civic Institute assisted the Erie County Criminal Coalition to obtain a \$10,000 grant to complete a strategic planning process.

***Erie County Prison Training Grant***

The Civic Institute assisted in the preparation of a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to enhance training within the Erie County Prison.

## **V. Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation**

### *Juvenile Detention Census Management Project*

In August 1998, the Civic Institute developed a pilot Level of Security Screening Instrument to assist the Edmund L. Thomas Adolescent Center in transfer decisions of youth to staff secure shelters. The Mercyhurst Level of Security Screening Instrument (MLSSI) was a tool developed to assure those youth transferred pose less risk to community safety, less risk of absconding, and less risk of harming themselves or reoffending than do ineligible youth. The Institute's staff complete screening forms based on information obtained through the detaining probation officers on all youth admitted to secure detention and prepare quarterly Census Management Reports for the Department of Human Services.

### *School Resource Officer Statewide Evaluation*

The Civic Institute was contracted in 2002 by the Center for Safe Schools and Communities under a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to conduct a two-year evaluation of the School Resource Officer Programs funded through the state. The first year evaluation included surveys of parents, teachers, and students in addition to site visits and personal interviews with the School Resource Officers and school administrators.

### *StartSmart*

The StartSMART (Stop More Alcohol-Related Tragedies) Foundation, a private, non-profit operating foundation contracted with the Civic Institute to conduct an evaluation of their new community-based program aimed at reducing alcohol use and abuse among youth within the community. The Millcreek School District was selected to be the first site of implementation of the program. The goal of the study is to determine whether the StartSMART education program, combined with the distribution of rapid saliva alcohol tests, will have an impact on drinking habits among adolescents and on the adverse consequences of drinking.

### *CROMISA*

The Community Reintegration of Offenders with Mental Illness and Substance Abuse (CROMISA) program provides comprehensive, intensive, individualized services to those being released from state prisons who have a mental illness, substance abuse history and at least a year on parole or probation so that they may fully and completely reintegrate into the community. The Civic Institute collects data, writes reports, evaluates, and monitors the functioning of the program, which has become a model of treatment for dually diagnosed offenders throughout the Commonwealth.

### *Parent-Child Home Program*

The PCHP, a nationally recognized replication program, provides trained home visitors who work with at-risk 2-4 year olds and their parents. By providing high-quality books

and toys and instructions on how to use them, the program leads to increased readiness for formal schooling. The Civic Institute collects data, writes reports, and evaluates program outcomes as a means to help improve the functioning of the Erie School District's Erie Family Center program.

*Erie County Mental Health Screening & Assessment Demonstration Project*

The Erie County Department of Human Services received a grant in July 2003 to implement a pilot screening and assessment service for early detection of mental health and/or substance abuse issues of those youth entering detention or shelter facilities through the Erie County Office of Children and Youth or Erie County Juvenile Probation. The Civic Institute is conducting the local evaluation of the project in addition to coordinating data collection for the state evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the program in early detection of problems and placement/service recommendations.

*Sanction Certainty*

The Mercyhurst College Civic Institute is currently conducting an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Sanction Certainty directive of the Erie County Adult Probation Department. In 1997, Judge John Bozza requested that the Adult Probation Department in Erie County implement a Zero Tolerance (Sanction Certainty) pilot program, which provide responses to violations with clarity, celerity, and certainty; the suspected outcomes being a reduction in the number of violations per violator and a decrease in the time offenders are detained. Upon completion of this study period, a final report comparing the outcomes of the evaluation with the preliminary report and previous studies conducted by the Erie County Adult Probation Department as well as another study by the Civic Institute will be produced.

*Medical Malpractice*

Judge John A. Bozza convened a group of interested attorneys and physicians to objectively determine the facts in the medical malpractice debate, especially as they relate to the situation in Pennsylvania. The Civic Institute sat on this committee to provide the research services and data as well as working with the group to publish the public report. FGDM?

**VI. Publications & Special Reports**

*Directions, II: Guide to Understanding the Well-Being of Children & Families in Erie County, Pennsylvania 2003*

*Erie County Community Reintegration of Offenders with Mental Illness and Substance Abuse (CROMISA) Program--Grant Period October 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003*

*Incorrigibility Annual Report, September 2003*

*Births to Teens Special Report, August 2003*

*Erie County Drug Treatment Court Evaluation Level III & IV Offenders*

*City of Erie Weed & Seed Revitalization Plan, July 2003*  
Medical Malpractice

*Civic Forum, Fall 2003, Winter 2004, Spring 2004*

*State of the Region: Quality of Life Section*

## **VII. Community Planning / Community Development**

*Solutions 2003, Strategies for Healthy Youth and Communities August 2003*

The Erie County Incurability Workgroup, facilitated by the Mercyhurst Civic Institute, planned and implemented a two-day training open to all program staff throughout the county servicing incorrigible youth and their families. The purpose of the training was to provide staff with an opportunity to obtain pertinent information helpful in carrying out job responsibilities while providing a forum for staff to discuss strengths and weaknesses in currently available services. The status of existing collaboration among agencies and organizations was also discussed.

*Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)*

A Civic Institute representative sits on the Implementation Team in guiding the introduction and implementation of the process to the Erie Community and involving as many constituencies as possible. Institute staff chair the Evaluation Subcommittee, determines the data to be collected and guides the development of the necessary database. The Institute will be responsible for the statistical analysis of the outcomes of FGDM in the future.

*United Way Child Impact Council*

A Civic Institute representative sits on the Impact Council which provides the United Way with input and guidance on developing their strategic plan related to an increased active role in the community-wide concerns facing Erie County's children, youth and families. This will impact funding allocations in the future, as well as possibly developing resources for special projects including collaborations of agencies and projects that affect community-wide indicators. Institute staff sit on the Information Subcommittee which provide data from a variety of fields over a number of geographies to the United Way and the larger group for consideration.

*Healthy Youth Development Advisory Board*

A Civic Institute representative sits on the HYD Advisory Board, which was revived and reorganized over the last year to move from a focused goal of preventing teen pregnancies to a generalized goal of promoting healthy youth development. A new director was hired to coordinate the activities provided by agencies, churches, schools and other interested parties. A Civic Institute representative sits on and currently chairs the Community Standards subcommittee.

### *Criminal Justice Advisory Board*

The Civic Institute conducted two start-up retreats for new criminal justice advisory boards in Butler and Mercer Counties.

### *Effective Use of Committees*

The Civic Institute conducted a workshop for Mifflin County on the effective use of committees.

### *Weed & Seed*

The Civic Institute, in partnership with the City of Erie, Erie Bureau of Police, and the Erie County District Attorney's Office, provides administration and support services to the Erie Weed and Seed Project.

### *Protective Services Curriculum*

The Civic Institute consulted with the Public Safety Director of Erie County, Joseph Weindorf, on the development of the protective services curriculum for Central High School in the Erie School District

## **VIII. SPEAKER SERIES**

### **Dr. Robert Orsi, *Passionate Citizens, Catholics & Democracy*, October 2, 2003**

Dr. Robert A. Orsi, Charles Warren Professor of American Religious History at Harvard Divinity School spoke at the Walker Recital Hall in the Hirt Center, October 2, 2003 at 7 p.m. The event was sponsored by the Civic Institute, Mercy Institute, and the Department of Religious Studies. Dr. Orsi received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Yale University in 1982. He has authored two books including: *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* which received the Jesuit National Book Award and John Gilmary Shea Prize from the American Catholic Historical Association and *Thank You, Saint Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*. During his presentation, Orsi addressed the intersection of two areas of Catholic life-- social justice and devotionism--arguing that they are not as distinct as most historians have treated them.

### **Captain Ron Davis, February 8, 2004**

The Civic Institute and the Erie Weed and Seed Project sponsored a one day training on culture and policing featuring Captain Ron Davis. Ron Davis is a Police Captain with the Oakland Police Department with over 17 years of experience. He currently serves as the Department's Inspector General and is the chair of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) Task Force on Racial Profiling, in addition to being a member of the Race Relations Committee of the National Commission on Police Integrity. He has served as a subject matter expert for the United States Attorney General; the United States Department of Justice; the United States Attorneys' Office; the National Conference of State Legislatures; the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on issues surrounding racial profiling and discrimination.

**The Honorable Richard L. Nygaard Speaker Series**, United States Circuit Judge  
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

- *Supreme Court Term in Review*, September 24, 2003
- *Religious Freedom/Church & State*, November 5, 2003.
- *The Eighth Amendment: Cruel & Unusual Punishment*, January 14, 2004
- *The Second Amendment: Review of the Right to Bear Arms*, April 21, 2004

**S. Alex Stalcup, M.D., *Methamphetamine Addiction & Treatment***, May 27, 2004

The Civic Institute partnered with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office to promote public awareness regarding the dangers of methamphetamines and clandestine labs over the past year. Dr. Stalcup provided a one day training on meth addiction and treatment. Dr. Stalcup is a graduate of Whittier College and a graduate of the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine. He is Board Certified in Pediatrics, certified in Addiction Medicine by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and certified as a Medical Review Officer by ASAM, and the Medical Review Officers Certifying Council.

**Drug Series, *Speeding Down the Highway of Life***, December 9, 2003

This forum focused on defining methamphetamines, identifying the effects on not only users, but also professionals at work, kids in the environment, and the community at large. The forum also provided important information on how to identify a clandestine meth lab in individual neighborhoods and what to do if one suspects a lab is operating within the community.

**Kinnane Conference: *Future of Crime: The Challenge for Justice***, June 11, 2004

The Civic Institute assisted in the planning and coordination of events for the Annual Kinanne Conference. The conference featured presenters, William Tafoya, Ph.D., Professor at the University of New Haven and Carl Anderson, Esq., Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. In addition, there was a panel on local homeland security. Secretary of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge, was invited to attend, but was unavailable due to the death of President Ronald Reagan, but did provide a taped message for the audience.

## **IX. Presentations**

- Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Conference, Las Vegas. Mark Beary, Research Analyst, and Erika Brown, graduate assistant, presented their research on the Sanction Certainty Directive in Erie County's Adult Probation Department.
- Amy Danzer made a presentation on Collaboratives in Erie County to Safenet's Women's Shelter on June 21, 2004.
- Amy Eisert presented on the Erie County Incurability Initiative at the Solutions 2004 Conference during which Amy Danzer presented on the State of Erie County's Children.
- Art Amann moderated a panel on Criminal Justice Boards for the Pennsylvania

Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

- Amy Danzer presented a Grantwriting workshop at the Northwest Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Center in Crawford County on September 25, 2003 and at Mercyhurst Preparatory School on January 29 and February 26, 2004.
- Amy Danzer gave presentations on the State of Erie County's Children to the Policy and Planning Council on September 10, 2003, to Erie County Council on October 2, 2003, the Gannon Urban Education class on November 5, 2003, the VISTA Advisory Council on November 11, 2003, and to the Millcreek School District Administrative Council on November 26, 2003.
- Amy Danzer gave presentations to upper class social work classes at Mercyhurst College on grantwriting, working with evaluators, and determining the need for data in social work programs during Fall term 2003.
- Amy Danzer gave an overview of Family Group Decision Making model and its implementation in Erie County to the Erie County Policy and Planning Council on May 5, 2004
- Art Amann and Amy Danzer gave a presentation on the City of Erie Racial Profiling study to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency/Bureau of Justice Statistics Conference on Research and Evaluation, March 30, 2004.

## **X. Technical Assistance**

### **Civic Institute Resource Center**

The Civic Institute has established a research library for Mercyhurst College students and the Erie community to promote the study of child and family issues. Resources include various publications/articles on issues such as poverty, crime, juvenile justice, health, education, program evaluation, and county profiles.

### **Children's Advocacy Center**

The Civic Institute provided consultation and technical assistance for the Erie County Children's Advocacy Center. The Mission of the Center is to support the well being of children victimized by physical or sexual abuse by promoting a coordinated, multidisciplinary response that reduces further trauma and improves the investigative process of interviewing children.

### **Erie County Policy & Planning Council for Children and Families**

The Civic Institute provides ongoing staff support to the Erie County Policy and Planning Council for Children and Families. The Council represents 60 community human service leaders, community representatives, non-profit organizations, government agencies, consumers of service and educators. The purpose of the Council is to provide a setting in which concerned agency representatives serving children and families seek to improve outcomes through adopting a more holistic and less fragmented approach to service

provision. The Council also serves as a mechanism to facilitate collaboration and stimulate research, discussion, evaluation and implementation of policy and programs to strengthen children and families in Erie County.

### **Erie County Criminal Justice Coalition**

The Erie County Criminal Justice Coalition, formerly known as the Erie County Criminal Justice Advisory Board, brings together criminal justice professionals, public officials, and private citizens to discuss pertinent topics affecting Erie County's criminal justice system. The Board provides a forum to share priorities, concerns, and opportunities and to work together on strategies for change. The Civic Institute staff help to coordinate activities of the Board and provides staff support. In addition to ongoing facilitation, the Civic Institute hosted a planning retreat for the coalition.

### **Statewide Criminal Justice Advisory Boards**

The Civic Institute has provided criminal justice technical assistance to various counties in the Commonwealth for the past few years. A project to provide policy assistance and training concerning mentally ill offenders has been completed in Cumberland County. Additionally, the Institute has consulted with Mercer, Westmoreland, Venango, Erie, Mifflin and Lycoming Counties regarding the establishment and maintenance of criminal justice advisory boards. In Mifflin County, the Institute is also involved in coordinating technology training for their law enforcement officials in order to more effectively investigate and prosecute criminals. Also, Dr. Amann, Director of the Institute, assisted the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency with a process evaluation of seven county criminal justice advisory boards.

### **Incorrigibility Work Group within the Erie County Policy & Planning Council**

The *Civic Institute* provides ongoing staff support to the Incorporrigibility Program Managers and facilitates the Incorporrigibility Work Group. The term incorrigibility refers to youth who are out of the reasonable control of parents, teachers and other legitimate authorities but not yet delinquent. The mission of the Incorporrigibility Work Group is to work toward the development of a system of services for incorrigible youth in Erie County that is accessible, coordinated, effective, and accountable and that minimizes the need for juvenile probation or child welfare involvement with affected children and families while identifying children and families who truly need such services.

### **Martin Luther King Center Strategic Plan**

The *Civic Institute* assisted the Martin Luther King Center's Board of Directors in developing a strategic plan for the MLK Center's future endeavors.

### **State of the Region Project**

The Northwest PA Workforce Investment Board asked the Civic Institute to develop indicators of the quality of life and ultimately identify goals and action steps for Northwestern PA.

### **Juvenile Drug Court**

The Civic Institute is participating in the needs assessment process pertaining to the implementation of a juvenile drug court in Erie County.

**Safenet**

The Civic Institute evaluated survey tools and implementation plans to determine the effectiveness of the SafeNet outpatient counseling program as well as measuring the knowledge and attitude change of the receiving outpatient counseling services.

**Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency**

Director, Art Amann, served as a member of the PCCD Criminal Justice Advisory Board Evaluation Committee. In addition, Dr. Amann, was named vice-chair to PCCD's Homeland Security-Law Enforcement-Justice System Advisory Committee, and serves as the chair of the subcommittee on Courts and Corrections.