

The

Civic Forum



Fall 2002
Volume 1, Issue 1

Recent Publications:

- Juvenile Offenders & Crime in Erie County
- Mercyhurst College Civic Institute Annual Report 2001-2002
- Analysis of Police Stops & Searches, City of Erie
- Erie County Drug Treatment Court Program: 18 month Status Report
- Modified Adult Probation Sanctions: Evaluation of Probation Supervision Sanctions Systems
- Teen Pregnancies & Births

Publications are available on our website at:

civicinstitute.mercyhurst.edu

Envisioning a Healthier Erie Workshop Offers a Brighter Tomorrow for Erie's Youth

Sister Maura Smith fulfilled a life-long dream by coordinating a Search Institute Workshop: *Envisioning a Healthier Erie* that was conducted at Mercyhurst Prep August 6th. Roughly 140 adults and 40 youth were in attendance for the all day workshop in order to gain a better understanding as to how they can impact the health and welfare of Erie County's youth.

As identified by the keynote speaker, Tim Duffey, "We have

professionalized the caring of the young." He pointed out that relationships are what matter. Throughout the day, participants were provided examples of how other communities have promoted asset building and were encouraged to identify ways they can influence asset building within Erie County.

What was proposed was not a program, but an idea, a language under which to operate in serving our youth. The assets presented were a part of research

conducted by the Search Institute. The more assets a youth was found to possess, the less likely that youth was to engage in risky behaviors. The assets, both internal and external, are common themes providing a framework of what needs to be solidly locked in place in order for our young people to do well. The hope is that all those in attendance left the seminar with concrete ways to promote asset building within their given capacities to brighten the future for youth in Erie.

The Civic Institute Changes Places and Faces

The Civic Institute has undergone a variety of transitions over the summer. **Art Amman** has been appointed Associate Director. Art has numerous years of administrative experience with criminal justice and served as Chief of Adult Probation as well as Warden of the Erie County Prison Department. Prior to joining the Institute, he was the Director of Criminal Justice Programming at Mercyhurst North East. Welcome aboard, Art.

As the Institute is elated to have Art Amann join the ranks, we are also saddened by the departure of **Sherrie Sonnenberg**. After eight years of service, Sherrie and her family have been transferred to Niagara Falls.

Amy Eisert has replaced Sherrie's position. Amy is a recent graduate from the Administration of Justice Program and the 2002 recipient of the Kinnane Graduate Award. Amy previously worked at Perseus House, Inc. as the Community Resource

Specialist for the CIRCLE Program.

The Institute is also saddened to lose Research Analyst, **Julie Bush-Miller**. Julie is moving to Mississippi where her husband is on active duty as an Air Force physician.

In addition to the staffing changes, a number of Institute offices have been relocated. The following reflect our new office locations:

Art Amann Preston 105
Amy Danzer Preston 103
Amy Eisert Preston 101

Analysis of Police Stops & Searches Completed

While results of the study are not entirely consistent, there is cause for concern.

Following months of data collection and analysis, the Mercyhurst College Civic Institute completed a study of officer-initiated stops made by the City of Erie Bureau of Police. In May 2001, the city had contracted with the Civic Institute to assist with the design and analysis of a study of racial disparity and in police activities. The city agreed to conduct the study after several months of meetings between the city, the Concerned African

American Clergy and the NAACP.

The Civic Institute reported to the city and police officials that while the results of the study are not completely consistent, there is cause for concern. The results revealed statistically significant disparity by race and ethnicity. During the period studied, minority motorists and pedestrians were significantly more likely to be stopped and searched than were non-minority motorists and

pedestrians.

The analysis was based on police officer-initiated stops of motorists and pedestrians occurring between September 1, 2001, and February 28, 2002. It examined stops by race and ethnicity, reasons for stops, location of stops, whether searches were conducted, reasons for searches and whether contraband was found subsequent to the search, among other variables.

Modified Adult Probation Sanctions Study Reveals Promising Results

“Results of this replication study suggest the MAPS protocol results in fewer probation violators who commit fewer violations.”

In November of 1999, the Erie County Adult Probation Director, Robert Lewis, and Judge John Bozza requested the Civic Institute conduct a replication study of the Reade Study, addressing the question as to whether or not swift and certain sanctions make a difference in outcomes of adult probation.

In 1991, the Erie County Adult Probation Department implemented a “violation matrix” supervision approach in response to local jail overcrowding. The violation matrix provided a hierarchical method of sanctioning probation violators, while reducing the

overall number of detainees lodged. Over time, probation officers found a decline in the efficacy of this matrix, as offenders became increasingly familiar with manipulating the anticipated consequences of their violations.

The results of the study found that the MAPS protocol resulted in fewer probation violators who committed fewer violations. MAPS participants also had a shorter average period of incarceration and were less frequently revoked from supervision. This was especially evident at the medium and maximum offender supervision levels.

The patterns of reductions in violations and recidivism that emerged using the MAPS philosophy may ultimately result in improved community-based supervision efficacy, enhanced community safety, and less need to utilize the Erie County Prison for long periods of detention. The MAPS protocol also resulted in an average incarceration savings of \$3,139 per offender as a consequence of shorter detention lengths, which can be interpreted as an overall incarceration savings of \$50,228 by utilizing the MAPS protocol.

Quality of Life Task Force

The Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board has sought to promote improved cooperation and foster excellence in workforce and economic development throughout the region. One vehicle to move towards their mission is the State of the Region Baseline Report, which included data provided by the Quality of Life Task Force.

Led by Research Analyst Julie Bush-Miller of the Civic Institute, the Quality of Life Task Force set out to determine key standard of living components essential in attracting and retaining workforce and businesses, as well as comparing the performance of these components within the

region to that of the state.

Identified areas of concern included the number of practicing physicians within the region. The ratio of physicians to residents within each county ranges from a low in Erie County of 1:386 to a high in Forest County of 1:2473.

The most alarming indicator is the rate of tobacco use during pregnancy. Statewide, 17.1% of all pregnant women place their unborn baby at unnecessary risk; however, the region's much higher 21% average is of greater concern.

Also of concern are juvenile alcohol offenses. Over the past four years, alcohol offenses among juveniles have increased from 11.5% to 13.4% of all

juvenile crimes. Both violent and property crimes have shown a moderate reduction, while drug crimes have shown a slight increase. The State Attorney General's Office warns of a potential increase in heroin use among juveniles within the near future, as well.

On a positive note, approximately 80% of the region's residents are registered voters, comparable to the state's voter registration levels. Approximately 65% of voters participated in the 2000 general election, which was slightly higher than the state's average.

The Quality of Life Task Force includes recommendations in the report regarding actions the region can take in order to improve in the areas

Statewide, about one in every five women expose their unborn child to tobacco by continuing their tobacco use habits throughout pregnancy.

In Erie County, the Civic Institute has been involved in facilitating the efforts of the advisory board since 1999."

Criminal Justice Advisory Boards

Criminal justice advisory boards (CJAB's) are county criminal justice planning groups. These groups are located throughout the state, and are a spin-off from local prison boards and partnership efforts to initiate intermediate punishment programs. Presently, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency (PCCD) is strongly supporting these groups with funding and technical support. The PCCD views these boards as being a highly collaborative vehicle to plan, implement, and evaluate county criminal

justice initiatives.

In Erie County, the Civic Institute has been involved in facilitating the efforts of the advisory board since 1999. Dr. Peter Benekos, director of the Mercyhurst College Criminal Justice Department, serves as the chair of the Erie County Criminal Justice Advisory Board. Assisting in this project has been Civic Institute research analyst, Julie Bush-Miller, who is currently the Board's facilitator.

Another initiative of the Institute has been to support statewide efforts to promote and implement CJAB's. Art

Amann, associate director of the Institute, is currently working with Lycoming County to implement a retreat for their criminal justice executives. Facilitating work conducted at their regular board meetings will follow this important first step. The Institute has also offered technical assistance to Mercer County. In addition, Mr. Amann has assisted the PCCD in presenting seminars and workshops on CJAB's throughout the state.

**Mercyhurst College
Civic Institute**

501 East 38th Street
Erie, Pennsylvania
16546



PHONE:
(814) 824-2327

FAX:
(814) 824-2182

Questions or Comments?

EMAIL:
aeisert@mercyhurst.edu

About Our Organization...

The Civic Institute is a college community partnership dedicated to the social, health, educational, and civil well-being of the Erie region. As an interdisciplinary initiative of Mercyhurst College, the Institute seeks to promote an engaged and informed citizenry within the Erie region.

The Civic Institute seeks to evaluate, understand and improve public policies and processes, which affect the region's citizens. It serves as a central repository for published information regarding the social and civil challenges, as well as opportunities facing Erie. In addition, the Institute seeks to provide Mercyhurst

College faculty, undergraduate and graduate students with applied social policy, research and evaluation experience related to child, family, health, and justice issues.

"We will ever 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."

-From the oath of the Athenian City-State

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

civicinstitute.mercyhurst.edu

MERCYHURST COLLEGE

CIVIC INSTITUTE

501 East 38th Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16546

