

The

Civic Forum



Fall, 2003
Volume 2, Issue 1

Upcoming Events:

Judge Richard L. Nygaard
The First Amendment

Nov. 5, 2003
at 8:00 p.m.

Walker Recital Hall

Recent Publications:

- *Directions, II*
- *Juvenile Offenders & Crime in Erie County*, April 2003
- *Criminal Justice Advisory Boards*, April 2003
- *Births to Teens*, August 2003

Visit our updated
website for publications
at:

civicinstitute.mercyhurst.edu

Arthur Amann Appointed Director of Mercyhurst Civic Institute

Art Amann, former Associate Director of the Civic Institute, has been appointed to the role of Director. Former Director, **Dr. Thomas Gamble**, vacated the position in June to assume the role of Vice President of Academic Affairs. Art earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Slippery Rock University, his Master of Science Degree in Corrections from Gannon and is currently pursuing his Doctoral Degree. Art has been a member of the Mercyhurst community since 1999. Prior to that, Art was the Warden of the Erie County Prison from 1993 to 1999 and Chief of the Erie County Adult Probation Department from 1983 to 1993.

Sue Johnson, former administrative assistant at the Civic Institute has taken

the position of Administrative Assistant of Academic Affairs. **Shelley Thayer**, a veteran of the Registrar's Office, has taken Sue's position at the Institute.

Research analyst, **Emily Reitenbach** resigned from her position in July and has been replaced by **Mark Beary**. Mark comes from Shippensville, Pennsylvania. He majored in Anthropology and minored in History at Clarion University and received his Post-Baccalaureate Advanced Certification in Forensic Anthropology from Mercyhurst. Mark was formerly a graduate student of the Institute and assisted with the *Directions, II* publication. Mark will be assuming evaluation of the drug and mental health courts and sanction certainty in addition to taking on new

projects.

Erika Brown has joined the Institute as a graduate assistant for the upcoming year. Erika received her Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice from Mercyhurst and is a graduate student in the Administration of Justice Program. In addition to her assistantship and academics, Erika works part-time at Federal Pre-Trial Services.

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Mercyhurst Begins Catholic Identity Speaker Series Featuring Dr. Robert Orsi

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 Gilmery 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.

This is the first presentation of a series to be offered at Mercyhurst focusing on Catholic identity.

The Incurrigibility Initiative Hosts Solutions 2003 Conference

The Incurrigibility Initiative has continued in its efforts to coordinate services for incorrigible youth and their families in Erie County. This year, the workgroup of the collaborative planned and implemented a two-day training open to all program staff throughout the county servicing incorrigible youth and their families, entitled *Solutions 2003*.

Eighty-six people were in attendance during the two-day training offered at East High School during August 11th and 12th. Attendees ranged from county workers, district justices, school district employees from both county and city school districts, as well as a number from non-profit organizations.

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.

During the opening general session, Amy Danzer of the Mercyhurst Civic Institute provided a presentation of the State of the Child in Erie County, with information drawn from the recently released *Directions, II*. There was also a round table discussion with participating district justices. Concurrent afternoon workshops were available for participants to attend.

The mission of the incurrigibility project is to

work toward the development of a system of services for incorrigible youth in Erie County that is accessible, coordinated, effective, and accountable, minimizing the need for formal child welfare or juvenile probation involvement with affected children and families.

Evaluation for 2002-2003 shows that less than five percent of youth serviced by the programs involved in the initiative require formal placement through the Office of Children and Youth and/or the Erie County Juvenile Probation Department. Erie's Incurrigibility Initiative has received statewide attention for its success. For more information on the project, contact Amy Eisert at (814) 824-2551 or aeisert@mercyhurst.edu.

Civic Institute Promotes Awareness Over Dangers of Methamphetamines

Three years ago only five labs were uncovered in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Region, but that number has risen to roughly 40 in the past year.

The Civic Institute has partnered with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office to promote public awareness regarding the dangers of methamphetamines and clandestine labs.

According to Elaine Surma, Senior Narcotics Agent of the U.S. Attorney General's Office, three years ago only five labs were uncovered in the Northwestern Pennsylvania Region, but that number has

risen to roughly 40 in the past year. These clandestine labs pose many dangers including chemical contamination, fires and explosions, child abuse and neglect, hazardous lifestyles, and social problems, among other risks.

A public forum is in the works that will focus 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 will also provide important information on how to identify a clandestine meth lab in individual neighborhoods and what to do if you suspect a lab is operating within your community.

Judge Nygaard Presents The United States Supreme Court Term in Review

Judge Richard Nygaard, Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, presented a lecture and discussion of the major decisions handed down by the United States Supreme Court in its most recent term. The presentation was held in the Walker Recital Hall in the Hirt Center at Mercyhurst College Wednesday,

September 24, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

Judge Nygaard reviewed the decisions announced last year by the Supreme Court including issues in the area of affirmative action, privacy rights, free speech and religious freedom, highlighting their backgrounds and legal foundations.

The presentation was

attended by over 160 criminal justice majors, political science majors, and faculty in addition to legal professionals throughout the county. This presentation was the beginning of a series of presentations that will be offered by Judge Nygaard through the Mercyhurst Civic Institute.

Criminal Justice Advisory Board Update

Criminal justice advisory boards (CJAB's) are county criminal justice planning groups.

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.

Weed and Seed Initiative Grows

The Erie Weed and Seed Project is moving along at a smooth pace thanks to the coordinators, Paul Gambill and John Villa.

John Villa came onboard in July, replacing Julie Bush-Miller as the AID Team Coordinator and is working with key members of local public, private, and community organization leadership. John will continue to provide leadership, technical assistance, and resource

support for the initiatives of the citizens living in the target area (12th Street to 26th Street, East Avenue to Cranberry Street).

Paul is heading the TALL Team (Target Area Local Leaders), consisting of residents in the target areas. This group is afforded leadership training and is charged with establishing and realizing revitalization goals.

I-Lead Training (Institute for Leadership Education,

Advancement, and Development) began in September. The I-Lead training is to help individuals find ways to reach their full potential and utilize that in community work with the revitalization plan. It identifies strengths and challenges, and teaches new skills while sharpening existing ones.

Anyone interested in joining the Weed and Seed project can contact John Villa at 572-0755.

Institute Assists in Medical Malpractice Evaluation

At the request of Judge John Bozza, the Civic Institute is working with a group of lawyers, physicians and the judge

to investigate the much publicized medical malpractice insurance rate increases. The emphasis is on what can be done locally

or advocated at the state level, although the lack of objective data has been hampering progress thus far.

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About Our Organization...

The Civic Institute is a college-community partnership dedicated to the social, health, educational, and civic 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 civic 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

Our New Website is Up & Running!

Visit us at:

civicinstitute.mercyhurst.edu

Questions or Comments?
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