



THE CIVIC FORUM

The Mercyhurst College
Civic Institute

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Civic Institute Presents at the American Society of Criminology 56th Annual Conference

Civic Institute research analysts, Amy Eisert, Mark Beary, and Erika Brown in addition to Civic Institute Director, Dr. Arthur Amann, and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Thomas Gamble, presented a workshop entitled "Assessing Policy Relevant Programs and Strategies" at the American Society of Criminology on November 18, 2004. The panel was chaired by Dr. Peter Benekos of the Mercyhurst College Criminal Justice Department.

The conference, entitled "Taking Stock: the Science of Criminology and the Pursuit of Justice" was held in Nashville, Tennessee from November 17-20. Mr. Beary and Ms. Brown presented on the

Evaluation of the Sanction Certainty Directive of Erie County which captivated the audience. The other presentations included the Evaluation of School Resource Officers in Pennsylvania by Amy Eisert, the Evaluation of Criminal Justice Advisory Boards by Dr. Amann, and the Analysis of Police Stops and Searches in the City of Erie by Dr. Gamble.

The conference was a great opportunity to share with others on a national level the research conducted through the Civic Institute in addition to being a positive team building experience for the staff.



Pictured above from left to right: Dr. Peter Benekos, Mark Beary, Dr. Arthur Amann, Amy Eisert, Dr. Thomas Gamble Photo Courtesy of Erika Brown.

Erie County Weed & Seed Revitalization

The Erie Weed and Seed Initiative has entered its third year of existence and "seeding" programs (neighborhood revitalization efforts) have been implemented in the target area, in addition to collaborative initiatives between residents and community service agencies.

Some of the efforts have included: Crime prevention and public safety efforts generated through the Police Athletic League, Citizens Police Academy, Junior Police Academy, Minority Police Officer Recruitment, Saturation Patrols, Cultural Community Education, Diversity Training for Law Enforcement Officers, Customer Service Training for Police Communication Specialist Operators, as well as leadership and development training for residents and volunteers.

In addition, grants are provided

to the following agencies to assist seeding efforts in the Target area:

St. Martin's Center for administrative handling to manage seeding funding and also to expand the food pantry and nutritional program.

Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network for outreach services, soup kitchen, intake and referrals for programming of collaborative agencies.

Catholic Charities for counseling, parenting sources, family enrichment programs, and follow-up programming for Project Women in Need.

Booker T. Washington Center for recreational activities for children, mentoring programs, home owners mortgage assistance programs, and after school sports programs.

Community Shelter for support programs including self esteem, anger management, budgeting, and healthy management classes.

Hispanic American Council for after school programming for refugee children.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church for recreational supplies for after school programs and for family strengthening programs.

Greater Calvary Baptist Church for staffing and supplies for youth mentoring, abstinence, and education programming.

By bringing together all of the critical assets within the community, individuals and organizations are working together toward positive community change within the target area.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Sanction Certainty

Civic Institute Annual Report 2003-2004

Juvenile Crime Report, 2003 Juvenile Arrest Data

Erie County Drug Treatment Court Evaluation, Level I & II Offenders, October 1, 2003 - March 31, 2004

Erie County Drug Treatment Court Evaluation, Level III & IV Offenders, July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004

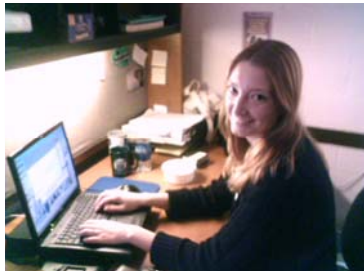
Erie County Treatment Court: Mental Health Court Status Report: Year Two; June 2004 Evaluation, 2004

Births to Teens Special Report, June 2004

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Institute Welcomes New Research Analyst & Auxiliary Staff



New research analyst, Erika Brown

In August of 2004, the Civic Institute welcomed Erika Brown as a new full time research analyst. Erika received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in criminal justice from Mercyhurst. She has prior work experience in residential programming in addition to pre-trial services through the federal probation department. Erika's projects include evaluations involving the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Erie County Department of Public Safety, Grover Cleveland Elementary School, and Sanction Certainty, among others.

In addition, Stephanie Smith joined the Institute as a graduate assistant. Stephanie is pursuing her Master's in Organizational Leadership. Stephanie received her Bachelor's degree in public relations and advertising from the University of Alaska, Anchorage.



Graduate assistant, Stephanie Smith

Sarah Miskell joined the Institute as a work study this fall. Sarah is in her second year at Mercyhurst pursuing her Bachelor's degree in criminal justice and has ambitions to move on to law school.

Statewide School Resource Officer Evaluation Moves into Second Phase

The Mercyhurst Civic Institute, in coordination with the Center for Safe Schools and Communities and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, is beginning the second phase of the statewide evaluation of school resource officers (SROs). The first phase of the evaluation was conducted during 2002-2003. This included surveys of parents, students, and teachers of

state funded SRO school sites. In addition interviews with the SROs and school administrators were completed.

The second phase will include surveys of law enforcement agencies that have previously received state funding for SRO programming. In addition, administrators from schools who have never re-

ceived state funding will be surveyed to identify SRO and other school safety programming prevalence and any barriers to implementation throughout the state.

The evaluation is anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2005. The findings will be utilized in the creation of a best practice manual that will be available for all police departments and school districts statewide.

Erie Home Team Gets a New Look

The Home Team is a collaboration of service providers for the homeless to coordinate services, eliminate gaps and prioritize local needs. One of the main responsibilities of it is submitting the HUD grant application for the county. The logo (to the right) is a part of the media campaign to let the community know

about the Home Team and raise awareness of homelessness. Agencies will be able to put the logo in the window and the homeless will know they can go there to get information about services for which they may be eligible.

Research Analyst, Amy Danzer, has been an active partici-

pant with the Home Team for many years. She was previously the chair the Children & Youth committee charged with exploring the prevalence and issues involved with unattached homeless youth (not all of whom are runaways but most often abandoned).





FGDM = Family Reunions for Kids

All too often when families have problems ensuring the safety and well-being of their children, a social worker or probation officer determines what happens to the children. Most would agree, however, that it is best to allow the family to make the decisions (so long as the decisions are in line with requirements). This old concept of “family intervention” is being used in Erie County under the name Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).

In FGDM, a family reunion or conference is held for both immediate and extended family, as well as close family friends to discuss the concerns at hand. The time, location, attendees and even the food are determined by the family. Professionals involved

with the family are invited to present information about their concerns and services they offer. The professionals then leave to give the family private family time to determine how to address the issues and to develop a plan. Usually within a few hours, this plan is presented to the referring caseworker (currently the Office of Children & Youth or Juvenile Probation) to ensure that it meets state requirements. FGDM has proven highly successful and is well received by both families and professionals.

Although new to the Erie area, the concept is ancient and FGDM is practiced internationally. Erie County started this practice this summer and it has gone extremely well with almost a dozen conferences taking

place so far. As this is a state initiative, Erie County has worked for over a year before beginning conferences and is looked to by those around the state, and even the nation, as an exemplary leader in planning for and starting operations in FGDM.

The Civic Institute is leading the local evaluation effort of the practice in determining the impact on the safety, permanency, well-being and restorative justice principles for the children served. In addition, we serve on the state-wide evaluation committee which is looking not only at these outcomes but the cost-sharing and cost savings of all FGDM programs across the state.

Civic Institute to Assist Grover Cleveland Evaluation of Comprehensive School Reform

Beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, Grover Cleveland Elementary School applied for and received funds from the Comprehensive School Reform program. The funding was obtained in order to implement the Academic Development Institute’s school reform model, Alliance for Achievement. With the implementation of this reform, the goals for Grover Cleveland Elementary School are: 1) to improve the academic achievement of students, with a special focus on writing; 2) to increase student performance and commitment to school; 3) to improve the level of involvement and participation of parents and families within the school community; and 4) to streamline the

instructional methods and curriculum of the teachers to help eliminate learning gaps and increase student performance.

Grover Cleveland Elementary School has requested that the Mercyhurst Civic Institute assist with the second and third years of evaluation for the Comprehensive School Reform grant funds. The Civic Institute recently prepared an analysis of parent participation at the grade-level parent meetings. The results showed that the two grades that received recent home visits, incoming kindergarten students and second grade students, had the largest increase in stu-

dent representation at the parent grade-level meetings. The Civic Institute is currently preparing a literature review of parent involvement with practical recommendations for Grover Cleveland. Additionally, the Civic Institute is creating teacher, parent, and student surveys to determine compliance with responsibilities set forth in the School Community Compact. A six-month preliminary report and a final report assessing student achievement will be completed evaluating student grades, test scores, and attendance.



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The 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. 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*

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