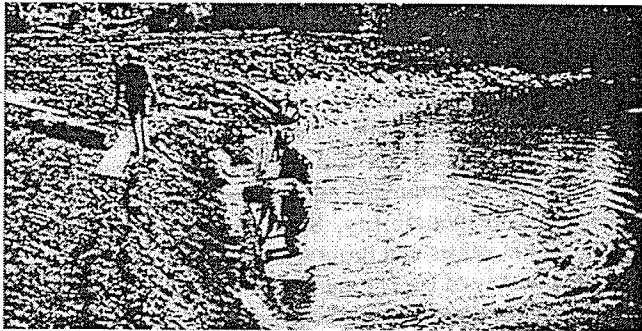


Juveniles: A Generation at Risk

Making a Difference

Community Service Helps Heal Troubled Youths

by Dennis Maloney and Gordon Bazemore



Courtesy Sentenced to Service



Community service helps build bonds between young offenders and the community. Left, offenders stabilize an eroding bank as part of Minnesota's Sentenced to Service Program. Right, offenders in North Carolina begin a construction project.

When a tornado ravaged a small town in southern Minnesota, the state's Sentenced to Service Program was summoned in the middle of the night and told to assemble a cleanup team. Early the next day, court-ordered community service workers reported to the hardest hit areas where they raised shelters, removed fallen trees and helped families search through the rubble for belongings.

In Quincy, Mass., young offenders ordered to complete community service work listened intently as the neighborhood theater producer discussed the importance of authenticity in set designs. Following a brief demonstration, the young people worked enthusiastically to construct the Props.

By 11 p.m. Friday, the work was done and the entire cast presented the young workers with free tickets for Saturday's opening performance. When the curtain went up, no one in the audience knew they shared the room with a group of probationers.

In Bend, Ore., more than 30 court-ordered youths braved ten degree weather to report to the Mt. Bachelor ski area where they loaded donated canned goods and clothing into trucks. The event, known as "Sharelift," culminated a week-long effort to gather food and clothing and raise money for construction of a 26-unit homeless shelter.

During the week, the young workers stuffed envelopes for a special mailing, distributed posters to downtown stores and hung promotional banners throughout town. With the help of these youths, the project raised \$600,000 and thousands of pounds of food and clothing for the poor.

Meanwhile, across the country, many young offenders sit in detention centers, where in the interests of "community protection" and "rehabilitation," they shuffle from their cell to the TV room in slippers and orange overalls. They argue over what show to watch or which video game to play.

Given the similar offense histories of these youths, society

must ask: Which approach advances genuine public safety? Which approach gives priority to the offender's responsibility for restoration? Which approach imparts values and behavior patterns necessary for long-term change? Which approach begins the process of reintegration of offenders into communities by helping to build a sense of belonging and changing public perception of these Youths?

Rediscovering Community Service

Service and various forms of unpaid labor have long been used as sanctions in the American Juvenile and criminal justice systems. Some early efforts focused on useful work and some youth programs taught vocational skills. For example in the early 20th century, the McLaren School for Boys, a state correctional facility in Oregon, operated as a full-fledged shoe and bootmaking manufacturing center. Delinquent boys were trained to design and construct shoes and boots and left the school prepared to work as cobblers. Hence, McLaren and many other juvenile correctional institutions were designated as training centers or training schools as opposed to reformatories or reform schools.

Unfortunately, McLaren's attempts were not widely replicated. Unpaid labor by youths and adults helped line the pockets of wardens and local businessmen. Concerned about exploitation of both children and adults, states had already begun restricting prison labor practices by the end of the 19th century.

Community service was not used again until 1966 in Alameda County, Calif., when municipal judges initiated a program requiring traffic offenders to perform unpaid labor. By the mid-1970s, criminal justice leaders, recognizing the tremendous potential of these sanctioning options, began initiating community service and restitution programs.

Judge Albert Kramer of Quincy Court, Mass., became a

spokesperson for the community service movement and his "Earn-It" program became a national model for victim restitution and community service programming.

In 1978, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) launched a \$23 million initiative that enabled 58 jurisdictions nationwide to develop pilot restitution and service programs in juvenile courts and juvenile justice agencies. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration provided similar support for programs for adult offenders.

Although federal funding, for community service decreased significantly by the late 1980s, an estimated 500 community service programs were operational nationwide as of 1990.

However, positive changes in the offender rarely are discussed as objectives of community service and punitive, menial assignments are the rule in many courts. Community service simply is not afforded the attention it deserves as a sanction capable of influencing offenders' attitudes or providing public benefits.

If community service is to realize its full potential, it must be placed within a new mission for community supervision that gives priority to these restorative and rehabilitative goals.

The Balanced Approach To Community Corrections

The Balanced Approach is a mission statement that incorporates the goals of community safety, accountability and competency in every dispositional order. This mission allows juvenile justice systems and agencies to improve their capacity to ensure community protection and accountability of the offender and the system and also enables offenders to become more competent and productive citizens (See Figure 1).

Founded on the belief that justice is best served when the community, victim and youth receive balanced attention, and all gain tangible benefits from their interactions with the juvenile justice system, the Balanced Approach is based on three performance objectives geared to each of the three clients of juvenile justice.

Community Protection. The public has a right to a safe and secure community and must be protected during the time the offender is under juvenile justice supervision. Juvenile justice must provide a range of intervention alternatives geared to the varying risks presented by offenders.

Accountability. Victims and communities should have their losses restored by the offenders making reparation, and

victims should be empowered as active participants in the juvenile justice process.

Competency Development. Rather than simply receive treatment and services that suppress problem behavior, offenders who come within the jurisdiction of the court should make measurable improvements in their ability to function as productive, responsible citizens.

Using these performance objectives, the most common traditional approach to community supervision, casework probation, warrants critical scrutiny.

Limitations of Casework Probation

Casework probation, the most common method for supervising, sanctioning, rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders, is difficult to defend as a sanction that delivers tangible community safety or accountability. Casework probation relies on a judge to order a set of rules or conditions for the offender to follow. The conditions are typically negative: "Cease acquaintance with delinquent peers," "Refrain from use of alcohol or drugs," "Avoid contact with victims." and the catch-all, "No further law violations."

To this list of don'ts, a list of dos is added. This generally requires that offenders participate in services or activities such as counseling, drug education, family therapy, tutoring, special education classes and job preparation to help them with their underlying problem. However, casework probation has one serious shortcoming: There is little, if any, attention paid to outcomes. Neither the prohibitions nor the prescribed activities require that the offender do anything beyond showing up for a counseling session or school.

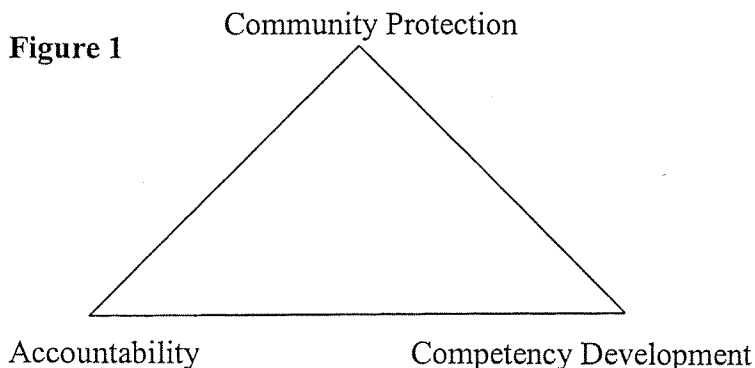
A close look at these probation practices illustrates inherent weaknesses and erroneous underlying assumptions in the juvenile probation system. First, expecting a single probation officer, who may be responsible for tracking 100 or more offenders, to influence the behavior of these people is farfetched. Second, simply ordering offenders to cease certain behaviors or even adopt positive behaviors assumes they have the skills to do so, which is often incorrect.

These assumptions may explain the findings of Dennis Romig who reviewed more than 12 major studies on juvenile probation involving 3,000 youths. In his book, *Justice for Our Children*, Romig, said, "The results were conclusively negative. Casework probation is not effective in the rehabilitation of delinquent youth."

Given the passive nature of probation casework, Romig's findings are not surprising. There is little in the probation system to reinforce either accountability or a sense of bonding between the offender and the community.

Potential of Community Service

In contrast, community service offers tremendous potential to fulfill the objectives of the Balanced Approach mission. For example, young offenders in community service work crews may be under adult supervision four, five or even six days a week for several hours a day. The adult supervisor not only observes the young person's work habits but can detect whether he or she arrives for work, intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Further, because offenders often work beside others, staff can observe and monitor disruptive or violent



tendencies that warrant more intensive supervision.

There is little in the probation system to reinforce either accountability or a sense of bonding between the offender and the community.

Accountability is at the very heart of the community service philosophy. Although courts may use coercive measures to ensure that offenders comply with orders, ultimately it is up to the offender to arrive at worksites on time and put in the required hours.

Offenders, in effect, sign a social contract that says: If you commit a crime against your fellow citizens, you have damaged the peace as well as general quality of life of the community. You can expect to give up time and energy by performing work that will provide restoration to the community for the disruption as well as for financial losses incurred (e.g., vandalism, police time). Although offenders may not like being on work detail, those who complete service orders have nonetheless chosen to fulfill an obligation. This demands a more active personal commitment than visiting a probation officer.

In addition, the potential for competency development is strong with well-run community service programs. The basic habits of reporting to work on time, cooperating with co-workers, following instructions, accepting constructive criticism and finishing a task can be carried over into life in the community. More sophisticated community service programs even provide vocational training opportunities that complement the basic program. Others reward workers who do a good job with a referral to a public or private employment agency. When offenders complete their community service hours at a nonprofit agency in the community, it is not uncommon for the agency to recognize their work with positive reference letters, commendation gatherings or even permanent employment.

If public safety, accountability and competency are important goals to be achieved during the dispositional phase of juvenile proceedings, then a well-run community service program is strategically suited to deliver results. The added outcomes of achieving genuine gains for communities set this requirement apart from any disposition that simply seeks to control behavior of adjudicated youths.

Principles of Balanced Service

Community service operates at its best when the work is seen by the entire community, including the young offenders, as honorable and worthwhile and when it is improving citizens' lives. The following principles can help corrections departments design projects that exploit the full potential of community service as an intervention capable of meeting the goals of the Balanced Approach.

Interestingly, the higher plane approach to community service is not that much more costly or time consuming than traditional programs, and the benefits are invaluable.

I. Worthwhile Work

The benefits of meaningful service work should be apparent to youths. If it is not, a brief explanation may be necessary. For example, before beginning a brush clearing

project, the project leader should discuss the fire hazards caused by brush and highlight the fire prevention benefits of the cleanup. In Deschutes County, Ore., young adult workers constructing a shelter for battered women and rape victims clearly understood how meaningful their task was. They asked to continue their work after their sentences expired.

II. Youths as Resources

When community service operates on its highest plane, the work is the focus of attention, and workers are treated as essential resources needed to complete the job. Many delinquents have been on everybody's "most unwanted" list since early childhood. When community service programs focus on tackling tough local problems, staff should convince youths that they are genuinely needed to solve those problems. Being treated as a resource helps youths develop stronger self-images and they are viewed by peers and the community in a different light.

Jerry Dulhurn, a longtime community service team leader in Deschutes County, has successfully supervised nearly 1,000 youth and young adult workers. He takes a no frills, straightforward approach to his work. Dulhurn describes it this way:

"Most of these folks don't need someone getting into their heads to find out about their bed-wetting habits as kids. They need somebody who has high expectations of their capabilities

Being treated as a resource helps youths develop stronger self-images, and they are viewed by peers and the community in a different light.

and pushes them to make a contribution. I've never understood why we spend so much time probing about what they can't do. When I'm on work detail I try to bring out their strengths. Everybody is good at something. We've got a firewood program in our county. If one of my workers slacks off, I jump on him and say something like, 'Hey, fella, if we don't get this wood in, some widow is going to be cold tonight.' You'd be surprised how much firewood we get to the folks with our approach."

III. Attention to Transferable Competencies

One ideal outcome of community service is to impart skills that can be used beyond the community service experience. Basic work skills can be reinforced without much additional effort. Specific technical skills gained can be inventoried and listed in a letter of reference for the youth. Equally important, social competencies, the ability to work with others and reliability are valued in any occupation.

IV. Sense of Accomplishment, Closure and Community Recognition

Whenever possible, projects should be designed to have a clear beginning and end. That way, youths can see firsthand the impact of their efforts. Seeing a project through completion boosts personal satisfaction, allows staff to formally recognize workers for their contribution and can provide a complete learning experience about the benefits of community service.

Delinquent Youths and adult offenders have prior offense

records and other documentation that tend to follow them around, influencing perceptions of them in school, at work and elsewhere. Community service allows them to accomplish something positive, to establish a record of success. Community service leaders should build on this opportunity by arranging for recognition through adult service clubs. These organizations can honor participants with certificate awards, tickets to sporting events, special luncheons and other gestures. A positive community response could contribute to the youths making better decisions.

V. Focus on Helping the Disadvantaged

There is a special atmosphere surrounding community service projects that benefit the disadvantaged. Something seems to click with offenders when they help at Special Olympics events, work in community kitchens or build homeless shelters. Perhaps it has something to do with the role reversal--they are doing something for someone less fortunate.

In a report, "Young Adolescents and Community Service," Joan Schine summed it up well, saying, "Adolescents who help to care for young children, who assist the handicapped, serve in soup kitchens, tutor their peers or younger children, visit with the aging, assist shut-ins, or advocate for the homeless are filling the void that our age of technology and specialization has created in their lives; like their counterparts of an earlier era, they are assuming meaningful roles and responding to real needs of their society as well as to their own need to be needed."

Service on Its Highest Plane

Community service that follows the principles discussed above fulfills the objectives of the Balanced Approach to achieve community restoration, offender competency development and community protection. It also provides added value to the community and offenders over and above the benefits that come from meeting these objectives.

Community service strengthens what criminologists refer to as the "bond" between youthful offenders and the community. As offenders take on meaningful roles providing service to others--and as they are treated as a resource rather than a problem--they increase their sense of belonging, usefulness and attachment to the community. In turn, as the community sees offenders making meaningful contributions, it becomes more accepting and supportive.

These new directions in community service illustrate that programs can do more than establish a baseline of accountability and punishment. They can become the foundation for an entirely new set of expectations and behaviors for offenders and the community.

REFERENCES

Bazemore, Gordon. 1993. Balanced and restorative justice for juvenile offenders: An overview of a new OJJDP initiative. C. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Freedman, M., C.A. Harvey and C. Venture-Merkel. 1992. The quiet revolution: Elder service and youth development in

an aging society. Washington, D.C.: Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

A. Klein. 1982. The theater connection. Traininz 'lmanual for a Court Employment and Training Program, Governors Youth Grant, Quincy, MA: Quincy Court District.

Maloney, Dennis, D. Romig and T. Armstrong. 1988. Juvenile probation: The balanced approach. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Rubin, T. 1986. Community service restitution by juveniles: Also in need of guidance. Juvenile and Family Court Judges 37(1).

Schine, Joan. 1989. Young adolescents and community service. Working paper, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

Statement of Ownership

U.S. Postal Service STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (required by Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code). (1A) Title of Publication: CORRECTIONS TODAY. (1B) Publication No.: 01902563. (2) Date of Filing: September 7, 1994. (3) Frequency of Issue: 7 times a year. (3A) No. of Issues Published Annually: 7. (313) Annual Subscription Price: \$15 (4) Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 8025 Laurel Lakes Ct., Laurel, MD 20707-5075. (6) Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: American Correctional Association, 8025 Laurel Lakes Ct., Laurel, MD 20707-5075; Editor: N/A; Managing Editor: Kurt S. Olsson, 8025 Laurel Lakes Ct., Laurel, MD 20707-5075. (7) Name and Complete Mailing Address of Owner: American Correctional Association, 8025 Laurel Lakes Ct., Laurel, MD 20707-5075. (8) Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. (9) The Purpose, Function, and Nonprofit Status of this Organization and the Exempt Status for Federal Income Tax Purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months. (10) Extent and Nature of Circulation: Average No. of Copies Each issue During Preceding 12 Months: (a) Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run): 23,419; (b) Paid and/or Requested Circulation: (1) Sales Through Dealers, Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales: 0. (2) Mail Subscriptions: 18,960. (c) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (sum of (10b1) and 00b2* M960. (d) Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier, or Other Means; Samples; Complimentary; and Other Free Copies: 3,815. (e) Total Distribution (sum of (c) and (d)): 22,775; (0 Copies Not Distributed: (1) Office Use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: 644. (2) Return from News Agents: 0. (g) Total (sum of (e), (f 1), and (f 2)) should equal net press run shown in (a): 23,419. Actual No. of Copies of Single Issues Published Nearest to Filing Date: (a) Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run): 24,500; (b) Paid and/or Requested Circulation: (1) Sales Through Dealers, Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales: 0. (2) Mail Subscriptions: 18,722. (c) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (sum of (10b1) and (10b2)): 18,722. (d) Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier, or Other Means: Samples: Complimentary; and Other Free Copies: 5,050. (e) Total Distribution (sum of (c) and (d)): 23,772. (f) Copies Not Distributed: (1) Office Use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing: 728. (2) Return from News Agents: 0. (g) Total (sum of (e), (f 1), and (2)) should equal net press run shown in (a): 24,500. (11) I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete: Kurt S. Olsson, managing editor.

Dennis Maloney is director of Community Corrections, Deschutes County, Ore. Gordon Bazemore, Pliff. is assistant professor in the School of Public Administration, Florida Atlantic University, and director of the Balanced Mid Restorative Justice Project.