



SALT LAKE PEER COURT

A PROGRAM OF UTAH LAW RELATED EDUCATION

645 South 200 East • 801-322-1815 • www.saltlakepeercourt.org

WINTER
NEWSLETTER
2016



From the Director



Kayley Richards

Salt Lake Peer Court is off to another successful school year of diverting youth away from the traditional juvenile justice system and thwarting the school-to-prison pipeline. The 2015-2016 year started with a busy summer of training followed by in-court mock trials and the kick off of hearings on September 28th. As of the end of January 2016, we held twelve evenings of hearings at the Matheson Courthouse and served roughly 120 referred youth and their families— this includes youth who had cases carry over from the 2014-2015 school year and new referrals.

Salt Lake Peer Court staff and volunteers have also been busy promoting and hosting events in the community. Restorative Justice Day was held in August. Community members were invited to learn about restorative justice in fun and interactive ways. Please see the article on page 2 for details. In October Salt Lake Peer Court joined other local agencies to promote the National Week of Action Against School Pushout. The week culminated with a community event that highlighted school-to-prison-pipeline issues in Salt Lake City and provided opportunities for youth and adults alike to get involved in advocacy. More information on the event is available on page 3.

As Salt Lake Peer Court moves forward into the rest of the 2015-2016 year rest assured we'll be busy! Referrals are coming in, community events are in the works, and we're approaching volunteer recruitment time for the 2016-2017 year. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for the support I've received as I've transitioned into the role of Program Director. The dedication I've seen from volunteers as well as the commitment and encouragement shown by partner agencies and the community at large is truly astounding.

At our volunteer swearing-in ceremony I shared one of my favorite quotes. Originally attributed to President Theodore Roosevelt I came across these wise words through Leslie Knope on an episode of *Parks and Recreation*, but I digress... President Roosevelt said, "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." Thank you for being part of this work worth doing. It's my privilege to be involved with such a great organization that is making such an important impact in our community.

P.S.— You're always welcome to contact me at 801-322-1815 or slpcourt@xmission.com for more information or to schedule a meeting. We also love having observers at hearings so we can showcase our work in action. Please let me know if you're interested!

Restorative Justice Day - August 21, 2015

Restorative Justice Day kicked off with a panel discussion featuring Salt Lake County District Attorney Sim Gill, Salt Lake City Interim Police Chief Mike Brown, and University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law student Amy Martz. The panel was moderated by University of Utah Gender Studies Professor Cathleen Power and the discussion focused on restorative justice as it relates to juveniles.



Panelists discuss restorative justice as it relates to juveniles.

After the panel discussion Salt Lake Peer Court, Salt Lake City Police Department school resource officers, and the Sorenson Unity Center led breakout sessions aimed at explaining how restorative justice practices are implemented in our area. The breakout sessions were also an opportunity for the Sorenson Unity Center to showcase their array of fun and educational after-school programs that help kids build new skills in a positive and supportive environment. Breakout sessions included a restorative justice exercise, a Q & A session with local school resource officers, and an art class facilitated by local artist Zach Franzoni. The event concluded with a mock hearing presentation by Salt Lake Peer Court's youth volunteers.

Roughly 80 community members participated in Restorative Justice Day including Salt Lake Peer Court volunteers, Sorenson Unity Center staff, representatives from the Disproportionate Minority Contact Subcommittee of the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice, and employees of Salt Lake County Criminal Justice Services.

"Importance of Restorative Justice" by Karishma S., SLPC youth volunteer

Restorative justice is a system designed to provide second chances by focusing on accountability, skill development, and community connection. Fostering accountability in youth offenders lets them recognize the harm of their actions and identify ways to repair this harm. Skill development provides opportunities for youth offenders to develop the skills necessary to grow from their experiences and learn how to make better choices. The final step, community connection, allows youth offenders a chance to participate in meaningful service within their communities in an effort to make them feel like productive, valuable assets in society.

Salt Lake Peer Court is an organization that changes lives each day. Peer Court's restorative justice program allows for great personal growth in both youth offenders and peer mentors alike. By using a system that focuses on harm and repair,



Q & A breakout session with school resource officers during Restorative Justice Day.

rather than crime and punishment, youth offenders are given a chance to recognize their mistakes, learn, repair, and give back. Peer mentors, like me, become more aware of issues faced by other youth. Restorative justice has broadened my perspective and has made me more compassionate toward people who may not be as fortunate as me. It has also allowed me to witness and respect the extreme dedication shown by underprivileged youth who work extremely hard to repair their lives.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." Restorative justice aims to involve referred youth in the community to make a lasting change. Not only does Salt Lake Peer Court help youth offenders understand the extent of harm the caused, it also gives them an opportunity to repair their wrongdoings. Restorative justice provides youth offenders with new opportunities by guiding them towards the next steps to a better future.

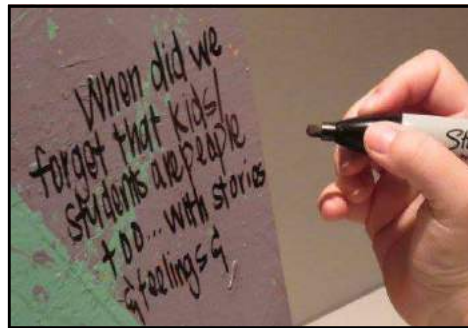
Did you know that SLPC now accepts referrals online? Go to www.saltlakepeercourt.org/referral-process/ for more info!

National Week of Action on School Pushout - October 3-11, 2015

The National Week of Action on School Pushout campaign is organized annually by Dignity in Schools. The theme of the week in 2015 was “Invest in Public Education Not Prison Cultivation.” Several Utah community and advocacy groups including Salt Lake Peer Court, Spy Hop, Planned Parenthood, the ACLU of Utah, Teen Council, and Racially Just Utah came together to promote awareness on school pushout, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Princess S., an SLPC youth volunteer described the issue as such, “As a teenager I believe it is best, especially at an early age, if we are able to help a youth better themselves rather than punish them without an explanation or lesson taught. Punishment without explanation can create anger, loneliness, distrust, and low self-esteem towards not only school, but any sort of work.”



Participants brainstorm ideas to alleviate school pushout.



Sharing thoughts on the community art piece.

Roughly 80 youth, parents, teachers, and concerned community members attended the public event held on October 7, 2015. University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law student, and former school administrator, Amy Martz opened with a presentation on the school-to-prison pipeline. Spy Hop presented a moving video which showcased the voices of youth in detention in Utah. Salt Lake Peer Court youth volunteers led discussion groups in which participants were able to voice their concerns on school pushout issues. The ACLU of Utah and Racially Just Utah provided information on how individuals can further the cause and the evening ended with a variety of interactive art and social justice activities highlighting the issues as they apply to different segments of our community.

SLPC Volunteer Voices

“Salt Lake Peer Court is important to the community because it truly helps the participants take accountability if they're committed to doing so. It also impacts the volunteers in such a way that allows us to work together to help make a better life for others. I've learned that you can't be quick to judge. The product of [the referred youth's] offense may be bad, but it's all about the back story and the process they take to rectify what they did.” –Simone B., youth volunteer

“A large part of the learning process is making mistakes. Sometimes, there is no second chance. Once the harm is done, you can forever be labeled as the "bad" kid, the one that can never improve or change. Peer Court is the chance to learn from mistakes, develop yourself and become involved in the community. Sometimes it's easy to feel alone (feelings we've all had at a time in our lives) and Peer Court has the ability to show students that they are not, and that there are people here who care about their success in life.” –Varesh G., youth volunteer

SLPC Participant Feedback

“One thing I really liked about my experience with SLPC is... people understood me.” –referred youth

“I appreciate the kindness and the consistency of keeping [my little sister] on track.” –sibling of referred youth

“Thank you for helping me do a lot better in school!” –referred youth

“Peers do a fantastic job explaining the program, problem solving, and following up.” –parent/guardian of referred youth

Recruitment for 2016-2017 volunteers is coming soon! Contact the office if you'd like to schedule an SLPC presentation.

Salt Lake Peer Court works to combat the disproportionate involvement of low-income and minority students in America's school-to-prison pipeline by providing *all* youth who commit minor offenses an alternative to the juvenile justice system. Our strategy aims to break the cycle of poverty by giving *all* youth a chance to avoid a lifetime in the revolving door of America's justice system.

Vision: As youth and adults working together, caring and showing respect for one another, we will improve our neighborhoods, cities, and juvenile justice system. Through youth-led education and coordination with local community agencies, we will assist our peers and their families to strengthen their ties to school and community while building positive new skills.

Funding Generously Provided By

Salt Lake City School District, Salt Lake City Corporation, Salt Lake City Police Department, B.W. Bastian Foundation, George and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, Marriner S. Eccles Foundation, R. Harold Burton Foundation, Salt Lake City Police Foundation, Sorenson Legacy Foundation, Utah Bar Foundation, Utah State Bar, Walmart

In-Kind Contributors Include

Administrative Office of the Courts, Xmission, Lowell Bennion Center (University of Utah), Third District Juvenile Court, Raw Bean Coffee House, Costco Wholesale, Utah Food Services, The Summit Group

Salt Lake Peer Court
645 South 200 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111