



Bethlehem Youth Court

The power of positive peer pressure

2024-2025 Impact Report

Utilizing a youth based restorative justice program
in our community



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Board of Directors

Co-Chairpersons:

Terri Egan, *Retired*

Adam Katz, *Assistant U.S. Attorney*

Secretary:

Gene Primomo, *Retired Assistant Federal Defender*

Treasurer:

Pam Robbins, *Executive Director, Policy Research Inc.*

Ex-Officio Member:

Hon. David VanLuven, *Bethlehem Town Supervisor*

Members:

Hon. David DeCancio, *Bethlehem Town Council*

Hakim Jones, *Principal, Pieter B. Coeymans Elementary*

Det. Sgt. Caitlyn Krage, *Bethlehem Police Department*

Jennifer Miller, *Retired Albany County Probation Supervisor*

Rosemary Queenan, *Associate Dean, Albany Law School*

Michelle Sleurs, *Probation Supervisor, Albany County Probation*

Thomas Spina, Jr., *Retired Assistant U.S. Attorney*

Student Representatives

Rurika Suzuki – BCHS Class of 2023-2024

Zara Pattison and Isabella Sindon – BCHS Class of 2024-2025

Julia Garcia and Maya Ragone – BCHS Class of 2025-2026

Director

Katrina Charland

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Impact Report

Introduction

Bethlehem Youth Court (BYC) is a non-profit organization that has been serving the Bethlehem community for 30 years. It is a restorative-justice based diversion program for young offenders and also provides young volunteers with unique civic engagement opportunities.

BYC's mission is to serve justice involved youth by providing them with a second chance at a clean record through participation in peer-led sentencing hearings and resulting peer sentence activities. This unique diversion approach within the justice system focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through accountability and reconciliation with victims and the community at large through the completion of community service and other positive sanctions.

Review

The effects of NYS policy shifts geared towards decreasing juvenile/youth contact with the justice system impacted program case numbers in 2024-2025, however, it is important to note that many of the cases that were handled required additional supervision, contact, management, and overall effort. Due to these policy shifts, BYC no longer receives some of the typical low-level cases that were handled in the past. The current trend is more serious cases, often involving much more intensive case management. Couple that with the overall decrease in juvenile arrest rates state-wide, BYC saw some of the lowest case numbers handled in our history. In an effort to continue to provide a valuable service to youth in the community, BYC implemented a traffic referral pilot program and school outreach initiatives.

While total case numbers may have been low, BYC bolstered volunteer participation in community events. An important aspect of civic involvement is participation in town sponsored events, such as: the Eggstravaganza, Walk and Roll Fest, National Night Out, Halloween Hay Day and Lights in the Park (which is now discontinued – but BYC proudly collected letters for Santa!). In addition to town and police department outreach programs, BYC was active with other community events including work in the Bethlehem Middle School Garden work and numerous Albany County's child safety seat inspections. In October 2025 student volunteers had the opportunity to participate in a Capital Hauntings Tour.

Student intern, Tom Fantry, from Siena, completed a fall semester internship in 2024. Duties included case management, community service supervision, and helping oversee youth court hearings. Tom was a welcome addition to the BYC scene during this time.

Offender Statistics

Between the years 2024-2025 BYC handled cases for 10 youths with a total of 18 various charges including multiple traffic infractions. BYC began accepting traffic referrals in January of 2025 as part of a pilot program which aims to increase driver safety while simultaneously alleviating financial impacts to young drivers and their families. A requirement for every traffic referral is the completion of a NYS DMV certified driver safety course. The program benefits include no points and no fines; however, participants must complete community service hours and the driver safety course to access these benefits.



Of the 10 cases handled between 2024-2025, 9 successfully completed the program. Reflecting on the earlier note regarding intensity of case management, the one case that was not able to complete BYC had extenuating circumstances that were beyond the capabilities of BYC's scope and parameters.

The most common offense heard during these two years was criminal trespass. Some of the more serious offenses included making a threat of mass harm (felony) and criminal possession of a weapon. A total of 121 hours of community service was sentenced, 4 apology letters written, and the completion of a decision-making class and peer pressure class.

Community Service

Community service was a major focus of offender sentencing and BYC volunteer participation. Overall, there were more 525 hours of community service performed by program participants to many local organizations. This included:

- Handmade holiday cards for residents at the Peregrine
- BCMS Garden
- Stuffing plastic eggs for the Eggstravaganza and assisting with event itself
- Albany County child safety seat inspections (8) total
- Walk and Roll fest
- National Night Out
- Halloween Hay Day
- Holiday Lights in the Park event
- Sidewalk Warriors
- Courtroom deep-cleaning
- Regional Food Bank



Left to right: Victor Franko III, Katrina Charland, Sandra Cooney and Maayan Amsterdamer

Volunteer Members

In the spring of 2025, BYC inducted 23 new volunteer members at the completion of a multi-week training course, which taught them not only about the justice system but also how to perform all of the courtroom roles. Members were sworn in by Judge Kirby and Judge Lynch delivered the keynote address during the ceremony.

Zara Pattison swept the scholarship competitions in 2025, winning a prize in all three BYC categories. She won the merit-based Andrew Napierski Memorial Award, the Judge Wenger Memorial Award (an essay contest), and also took second place in the Judge Jordan Memorial Award!

Isabella Sindon won first place in the Judge Jordan Memorial Scholarship, which was made possible by donations from the Bethlehem Police Benevolent Association and the Police Supervisors' Association.



Left to right: Hon. David DeCancio, Zara Pattison, Isabella Sindon, and Katrina Charland

Other noteworthy events for members in 2025 were:

- Ice cream social in June, provided by Stewart's, to celebrate the end of the school year and send off graduating seniors.
- A trip to the NYS Capital to participate in a Capital Hauntings Tour and visit with Supreme Court Justice Dan Lynch, along with a tour of the courtroom.
- Two BYC seniors, Olivia Rose and Julia Garcia, participated as panelists during an OPDV conference.
- Each member received a custom BYC quarter-zip, which was made possible by a grant from the Pioneer Foundation.



Association of New York State Youth Courts (ANYSYC)



As the Co-President of the ANYSYC, BYC Director, Katrina Charland, continued to be involved in state-wide meetings, including a Director's Symposium that took place in Putnam County in June of 2025. Attendance at these events and participation in quarterly meetings is an essential aspect of networking at the state level. Charland also presented at the New York State Youth Bureau (NYSYB) conference in November 2025 in Albany, promoting youth courts as diversion programs for youth bureau consideration.

Financial Outlook

BYC received funding from the following grant sources in 2024-2025: Stewart's Holiday Match, Office for Child and Family Services (OCFS), and Pioneer Foundation. Donations are also accepted from private donors via check, PayPal (via our website), Give Lively and through the state led SEFA campaign.

Funding from the Town of Bethlehem has historically been, and remains, the most important financial source for BYC, and for that, we are incredibly grateful.



7-Year Comprehensive Statistics

Data prior to 2019 is available upon request.

Comprehensive Statistics 2019-2025								
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Breakdown
Total # of cases	25	16	3	19	20	3	7	Total: 93
% of successful cases	96%	94%	100%	100%	100%	100%	86%	Average: 97%
Total # of community service hours sentenced	450	219	57	267	472	56	65	Total: 1586
Total # of community service hours performed by program	1275	430	296	609	872	190	336	Total: 4008
Average # of hours sentenced per offender	18	14	19	15	23.6	18.7	10.5	Average: 16.971429
Average age of offender	15	16	15	14	16	14	14	Average: 14.857143
% Males	72%	60%	67%	79%	75%	67%	100%	Average: 74%
% Females	28%	40%	33%	21%	25%	33%	0%	Average: 26%
\$ Restitution Paid	\$3,333	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Total: \$3,333
Apology letters written	12	2	2	11	8	2	3	Total: 40
Educational classes sentenced	14	3	1	2	1	0	3	Total: 24
# of offenders who signed up as volunteers	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	Total: 2
Most Common Charge	Criminal Mischief (19%)	Trespass (35%)	Split 3 ways: trespass, making graffiti and unlawful dealing with a minor	Criminal Trespass 3rd	Trespass	Split between Making a Threat of Mass Harm; Criminal Trespass 3rd; CP Weapon; Aggravated Harassment	Criminal Trespass 3rd	
Second most common charge	Burglary 17%	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th (23.5%)		Arson 5th, Harassment, and Reckless Endangerment- property	Conspiracy 6th			

Photo Gallery



2025-2026 Senior Representatives Julia Garcia and Maya Ragone at the NYS Capital



NYS Capital Tour: Left to right: Katrina Charland, Victor Franko III, Xrysanthi Sokaris, Maya Ragone, Jillian Reynolds, Julia Garcia, Alexander Givner, Asha Poricanan, Brigid Koennecke, Sandra Cooney, Zoey Larman, Ella Cady, Maayan Amsterdamer, Riley Altimari, and Hon. David DeCancio

Check presentation by Pioneer Foundation, from left to right: Hon. David DeCancio, Julia Garcia, Pioneer representative Nadia Murtaugh, Katrina Charland, and Hon. David VanLuven.



National Night Out, 2025: Remas Naser, Jillian Reynolds, Ella Cady, Maya Ragone, Anika Bhupati, and Purvayi Patil.



June 19th, 2025 Ice Cream Social: Standing left to right: Brigid Koennecke, Katrina Charland, Remas Naser, Liam Singh, Ethan Barry, Riley Altimari, Maayan Amsterdamer, Liam Cusimano, Hon. David DeCancio. Sitting left to right: Asha Poricanin, Alexander Givner, Xrysanthi Sokaris, Anika Bhupati, and Sandra Cooney