



Bethlehem Youth Court

The power of positive peer pressure

2021 Annual Report

Utilizing a youth based restorative justice program in our community



Contents

Board of Directors:	3
Contact Information:	3
End of Year Report	4
Introduction	4
Pandemic Related Effects on BYC	4
Offender Statistics	5
Community Service	5
Volunteer Members	6
Association of New York State Youth Courts (ANYSYC)	6
Financial Outlook	6
5-Year Comprehensive Statistics	7
Photo Gallery	8

Board of Directors:

Co-Chairpersons:

Terri Egan
Thomas Spina, Jr., *Assistant U.S. Attorney*

Secretary:

Sergeant Michael Whiteley, *Bethlehem Police Department*

Treasurer:

Maureen McLeod, PhD., *Sage Colleges Professor Emerita*

Ex-Officio Member:

Hon. David VanLuven, *Bethlehem Town Supervisor*

Members:

Chief Gina Cocchiara, *Chief of Bethlehem Police Department*

Dan Coffey, *Bethlehem Town Board Member*

Hakim Jones, Principal, Pieter B. Coeymans Elementary

Adam Katz, *Assistant U.S. Attorney*

Nancy Maurer, *Director, Field Placement Programs, Albany Law School*

Jennifer Miller, *Albany County Probation Retiree*

Gene Primomo, *Assistant Federal Defender*

Pamela Clark Robbins, *President, Policy Research Associates*

Michelle Sleurs, *Probation Supervisor, Albany County Probation*

James Smith, *Hall Principal, Bethlehem Central High School*

Student Representatives

Stacey Lee & Isabella Evangelista – BCCHS class of 2020-2021

Ziran (NeiNei) Du & Nicole Cintrón – BCCHS class of 2021-2022

Director

Katrina Charland

Contact Information:

Bethlehem Youth Court
261 Elm Ave.
Delmar, NY 12054
(518) 439-4955 x1143 – office
(518) 320-2350 – mobile
byc@townofbethlehem.org
www.BethlehemYouthCourt.org

End of Year Report

Introduction

Bethlehem Youth Court is a non-profit organization that has been serving the Bethlehem community for over 25 years as a restorative-justice based diversion program for young offenders and volunteers. Bethlehem Youth Court's mission is to serve justice involved youth by providing them a second chance at a clean record through participation in peer-led sentencing hearings and to promote positive civic engagement for young volunteers. This unique diversion approach within the justice system focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large through the completion of community service and other positive sanctions.

Pandemic Related Effects on BYC

Bethlehem Youth Court continued to serve the community throughout the pandemic and was proudly caught up on all backlogged 2020 cases by February of 2021. Although the pandemic caused a major slow down on hearings in 2020, we remained dedicated to responding to youthful offenses, completion of community service, and accepting appropriate cases as referrals.

Modifications that were put in place midst the pandemic continued throughout 2021. They included converting our traditional "Youth Judge Model", which utilizes a peer-jury panel comprised of 6-12 jurors as the sentencing group, to a "Tribunal Model" which instead uses a panel of 3 trained members as the judges who make the final sentence recommendation. By fall of 2021 we were able to resume hearing cases in the traditional courtroom. Prior to resuming cases in the courtroom, hearings had been held at Bethlehem Town Hall in conference rooms. While this space use was very much appreciated and necessary to facilitate our continuation of services, returning to the official courtroom was a welcomed sign of "normalcy" for our volunteers. When hearings were not scheduled, trainings and mock hearings were a helpful way to keep our volunteers engaged.



As the year progressed, it became quite clear that there was an overall trend toward a decreased number of referrals and increased need of supervision for those cases that were referred. It is difficult to pinpoint the explanation for this trend, with presumably many contributing factors, but most notably being pandemic related ramifications.

There was a lot of carry-over from 2020 statistics that actually occurred in the calendar year 2021, therefore a more accurate analysis of the program's overall impact on the community

should keep that in context. Additionally, as referrals slowed, our volunteers increased their participation in community-based events and activities which helped ensure that the program continued to serve the community in meaningful ways.

Offender Statistics

Three out of seven cases referred to BYC in 2021 proceeded through the program. This is a stark contrast to previous years and warrants a detailed narrative that demonstrates BYC's availability and willingness to have handled a typical caseload. In fact, the Director took many opportunities to seek out explanations for such a drastic drop in cases and to remind community stakeholders of our services. Four of the seven referrals declined to participate for varying reasons.

Offenses heard were: trespass, making graffiti, and unlawful dealing with a minor. All of the participants completed the program.

One case in particular was extremely time consuming and involved not only criminal behavior, but also both housing and school crisis. Through partnerships with multiple support service agencies, the BYC Director played an integral role in getting this young person enrolled in Glenmont Job Corp, where they were able to make positive life changes. This young person now has a promising future. This is not a "typical" youth court case, but helps demonstrate the need to shift efforts and resources in 2021.

Other cases that were handled also required much more intensive case management.

Community Service

To help offset the overall decreased caseload, BYC volunteers shifted community service focus to more town projects and activities. We participated in:

- Adopt-a-highway cleanups
- Stuffing bags for the Eggstravaganza
- All Albany County car seat safety inspections
- Walk and Roll fest
- National Night Out
- Holiday Lights in the Park event
- Normanskill Ravines trail work



Jonathan Neal at National Night Out

Volunteer Members

Training of new members resumed in 2021 with 11 new inductees who participated in a hybrid online and in-person training that spanned over 6 weeks. They are now qualified to participate in all youth court hearing roles.

The Judge Jordan Memorial scholarship was also reinstated after a hiatus in 2020, with the financial support of the Bethlehem Police Supervisors' Association, the Bethlehem Police Benevolent Association and individual donors. The winner of that scholarship, Isabella Evangelista, presented a case to a panel of judges. Federal Court magistrate, Hon. Mae D'Agostino, was graciously the guest speaker. The winner of the Judge Wenger Scholarship, an essay contest, was Natalie Qualia. Senior members received their graduation cords to wear with their caps and gowns during the BCHS commencement ceremony.



Judge Jordan Scholarship competitors, left to right: Stacey Lee, Lizzy Kloss, Isabella Evangelista and Natalie Qualia



Association of New York State Youth Courts (ANYSYC)

The BYC Director continues to be an active member serving as the secretary for the ANYSYC, which hosts quarterly meetings to collaborate and network with similar programs across the state. Although no in-person conferences were held in 2021, the goal is to host an event in 2022.

Financial Outlook

BYC received a \$1,000 grant through the Stewarts Holiday Match in the spring of 2021. This community fund drive has been a wonderfully consistent source of grant funding from year to year. We also received over \$4,000 in donations through our annual letter campaign. Funding from the Town of Bethlehem remains the most consistent and vital source of revenue for the program. Continued support by the Town of Bethlehem is incredibly appreciated. Additionally, BYC was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Office of Child and Family Services, contracted through the Albany County Youth Bureau.

5-Year Comprehensive Statistics

Data prior to 2017 is available upon request.

Comprehensive Statistics 2017-2021							
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Breakdown	
Total # of cases	31	31	25	16	3	Total:	106
% of successful cases	97%	97%	96%	94%	100%	Average:	97%
Total # of community service hours sentenced	636	583	450	219	57	Total:	1945
Total # of community service hours performed by program	1632	1678	1275	430	296	Total:	5015
Average # of hours sentenced per offender	20.5	18.8	18	14	19	Average:	18.06
Average age of offender	17	16	15	16	15	Average:	15.8
% Males	61%	65%	72%	60%	67%	Average:	65%
% Females	39%	35%	28%	40%	33%	Average:	35%
\$ Restitution Paid	\$45	\$0	\$3,333	\$0	\$0	Total:	\$3,378
Apology letters written	7	4	12	2	2	Total:	27
Educational classes sentenced	14	10	14	3	1	Total:	41
# of offenders who signed up as volunteers	0	1	0	0	1	Total:	2
Most Common Charge	UPM (27.5% of cases)	UPM (33%)	Criminal Mischief (19%)	Trespass (35%)	Split 3 ways: trespass, making graffiti and unlawful dealing with a minor		
Second most common charge	Petit Larceny (15%)	Petit Larceny (20%)	Burglary 17%	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th (23.5%)			

Photo Gallery



BYC volunteers Isabella Richards and Rachel Barnes performing an Adopt-a-Highway clean-up.



Volunteers Jonathan Neal, Lucy Whiteley, and NeiNei Du at the Walk and Roll Fest.



Volunteers Phoebe Hosford and Claudia Grimaldi at National Night Out.



Judge Wenger Scholarship recipient, Natalie Qualia with Director, Katrina Charland.



BYC Director, Katrina Charland, and volunteers, Nicole Cintrón, Naomi Doyle, and Phoebe Hosford at the Town's annual Holiday Lights in the Park event.