

Red Hook Court Brings Justice Closer to Home

Can a court make a significant and positive impact on a community hard hit by unemployment, drug abuse and related social problems? Brooklyn's Red Hook Community Justice Center—set to open its doors next summer—expects to do just that.

The Red Hook Community Justice Center will address drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and domestic violence, problems that exist everywhere but are all too visible here. The hope is to keep offenders, especially juveniles, out of trouble with the law and to help them turn their lives around.

What sets the center apart from other courts is that it brings together the functions of a court, a community center and multiple social service providers. A single judge will handle Family and Civil Court matters as well as criminal arraignments and misdemeanor proceedings—all under one roof—making for speedier, more effective justice. Low-level offenders will be required to repay the community for their crimes by performing tasks like painting buildings, cleaning streets and helping out at neighborhood nonprofit organizations. Offenders also may be ordered to complete on-site drug treatment, job training or other programs, which will be available to everyone in the community as well. In addition to Red Hook, the Justice Center will serve the surrounding areas of Boerum Hill, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Heights, Gowanus and Park Slope.

Locals helped select the center's site, Red Hook's abandoned Visitation School, choosing the parochial school because they liked its central location and

wanted to put the once stately building back into good use. Renovation of the site, underwritten by the City of New York and estimated at \$4.8 million,

provides for a courtroom, a judge's chambers, secure holding areas for defendants, and space for community meetings, legal and social services, and medical and child care facilities.

A Community Speaks

The Justice Center was spearheaded by the Center for Court Innovation, the state court system's research and development arm, and is the product of a unique alliance involving the commu-

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Chief Judge Judith Kaye (fourth from left), NYC Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (third from left) and other officials pitch in at ground-breaking for Red Hook Community Justice Center.

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nity, the City of New York, and private and public organizations. The concept for the Justice Center was sparked by a tragic incident that took place in Red Hook in late 1992—the stray-bullet killing of a beloved school principal, P.S. 15's Patrick Daly, Sr. Daly was struck down while on his way to see a truant student who lived in the Red Hook Houses, a public housing complex located across the street from the school. A wake-up call for the community, his violent death focused public attention on the rampant drug abuse and crime in Red Hook, leading to the center's creation. During a ground-breaking ceremony for the Justice Center in June, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes called Daly “a local hero whose commitment to Red Hook will live on through the center.”

Groundwork for the center began by talking to the people who best understood Red Hook's problems—local residents, merchants and community leaders—and assessing their expectations and needs. One of those surveyed, Wally Bazemore, a life-long Red Hook resident and one of the center's active supporters says, “I

remember how Red Hook used to be before the drugs. I want to get it back to that level and beyond, and I see the Justice Center playing a big role.”

An Exemplary Model

The Red Hook center's unique model of justice owes a great deal to the award-winning Midtown Community Court. Opened in October 1993, this court began as a testing ground for innovative approaches to low-level, nonviolent crimes—shoplifting, vandalism and prostitution, for example—that were endemic to Manhattan's Midtown area. Explaining the court's philosophy, its presiding judge, Eileen Koretz, says, “Sentences here are designed to pay back the community, plus we provide treatment for defendants, addressing the social problems—drug abuse, unemployment and the like—associated with low-level offenses. Using our state-of-the-art computer technology, I can immediately access a defendant's history, making the process more personalized and giving me wider sentencing options.” This combination of community service and treatment has been a stepping stone to

change for some offenders. In fact, nearly one-fifth of those who complete their sentences voluntarily return to the court to take advantage of its treatment and social service programs.

At the Midtown Community Court, most defendants receive same-day sentences running the gamut from cleaning streets to helping local nonprofit organizations with bulk mailings, all under careful supervision. With the significant drop in crime in Midtown Manhattan in recent years, studies show that the court has contributed to the renaissance of the Times Square area.

Red Hook will build on the Midtown Community Court model, expanding it to incorporate Family and Civil Court matters, such as domestic violence and tenant-landlord disputes. Like the Midtown Community Court, the Red Hook Community Justice Center will employ advanced computer technology to monitor compliance and provide the judge with information needed to make informed decisions. The center will also use the latest computer and video technology to link local prosecutors and defense attorneys to judges at the central courthouse in downtown Brooklyn for remote arraignments and other proceedings.

Fostering Community Spirit

The first component of the Justice Center's aggressive approach to improving the quality of life in Red Hook—the Red Hook Public Safety Corps—has been up and running



Drawing by Daniel Brody for Alta Indelman, Architect

Architect's rendering of the Red Hook Community Justice Center

since 1995. Part of President Clinton's AmeriCorps national service program and a joint effort with Victim Services and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, the Corps offers volunteers a living stipend and tuition assistance in exchange for a year of community service. Volunteers are trained to perform various services, such as helping victims of domestic violence, tutoring at schools and providing intake and referral services at Brooklyn's Housing, Drug and Criminal Courts. Corps members also work with the New York City Housing Authority on safety checks and tenant patrols of Red Hook's public housing. Personifying the values of the Justice Center, many volunteers move on to jobs in public service.

Patricia Henry, a former municipal employee and a Corps volunteer since January, sees the Safety Corps as an opportunity to be of service to others. "It's an important commitment and a valuable experience. You learn so much. I'm proud to be a Corps member," she says.

Another part of the Justice Center already in operation is the Red Hook Youth Court. Launched earlier this year in partnership with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, Good Shepherd Services and the New York City Police Department, it uses positive peer pressure to benefit young offenders and teach teens civic responsibility. Reaching out to adolescents just beginning to display social or emotional problems—before their actions become more serious—the Youth Court tries teens who have already acknowledged responsibility for a violation or misdemeanor, pro-

vided they agree to appear before a jury of their peers. Offenders are sentenced to community service and assigned mentors.

Looking Ahead to A New Era

The Red Hook Community Justice Center has already captured widespread attention as a national model of community justice. Says Nancy Gist, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the U.S. Department of Justice, which provided \$1.4 million in funds to the Red Hook center, "This is an investment, not only in Red Hook's future, but in the future of justice in our country."

Taking New York's lead, Oregon recently opened its first community court in Portland, and another is scheduled to open in Hartford, Connecticut. Community courts are also in the works for other

Your Comments Really Do Make a Difference . . .

A bill giving jurors who serve at least 11 days an additional four-year respite from further jury duty originated from a juror's suggestion. The bill was signed into law by Governor Pataki on August 1st.

If you would like to let us know about your jury experience or have comments or suggestions about the jury system, you can write to:

*Continuing Jury Reform
Office of the Chief
Administrative Judge
25 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004*

major cities including Baltimore, Indianapolis, Philadelphia and Minneapolis. ♦

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

CBS News anchor Dan Rather served on jury duty this past June at the New York County Supreme Court in Manhattan. The following is his commentary on the jury system, which aired on radio stations around the country and overseas.

Dan Rather reporting. News, commentary and analysis. Hello, everybody.

Jury duty today. While this broadcast is often done live, today is one of those times when it is taped. The reason: jury duty. This reporter's time to report at the courthouse and be available for jury service, which is done happily, with, yes, pride and thanksgiving. Pride and thanksgiving because freedoms have their price. And the freedom

to be tried by a jury of one's peers is one of the great American freedoms, another one that we—all of us—take too much for granted. This comes especially to mind just now because your reporter has spent time recently, again, in France working on . . . a special broadcast of the program "48 Hours."

France, of course, is a great country with a great tradition of freedom itself; but you can't be around the French

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Jackie* and Thomas* married about a year after they first met, but Jackie soon realized she'd made a terrible mistake. The charming man she thought she knew turned out to be a jealous and violent husband who watched her every move, verbally and physically abused her, and even sold her jewelry for money to buy drugs. Arrested for injuring Jackie during one of their fights, Thomas served jail time and is now in a residential drug program. Says Jackie, who has had trouble sleeping since the abuse started, "All my confidence, my self-esteem, went down the drain with this relationship. Right now, I feel hopeless, like there's no light at the end of the tunnel." Jackie is one of the many victims of domestic violence, which knows no social, economic, racial or cultural barriers, wreaking havoc on countless lives every day.

Each year, at least one million women suffer violence by an intimate, and over three million children are exposed to violence against their mothers or female caretakers by family members. During the six months following an episode of domestic violence, about one-third of battered women are victimized again. Studies show that children who witness domestic violence suffer severe emotional damage that can lead to developmental delays and problems later in life, including alcohol and drug abuse. Raised in such unstable homes, these children are often subjected to physical and even sexual abuse, and may themselves grow up to be batterers or victims.

A Different Kind of Crime

Fundamentally different from other criminal matters, domestic violence cases pose special risks, such as the potential for escalating violence. To address the risks and other issues associated with domestic violence, the New York State court system

has initiated several strategies including extensive training for judges and court staff on domestic violence, technology to leverage resources and improve performance, specialized courts to respond to the challenges domestic violence cases present, and better coordination of efforts with partner agencies.

Together with the State Police and other criminal justice agencies, the Unified Court System created a state-wide computerized Domestic Violence Registry in October 1995 to provide law enforcement and court personnel immediate access to information concerning orders of protection and war-

rants issued in domestic violence cases. Now, courts throughout the state can run a registry check on every new domestic violence filing, so that the judge has a defendant's prior history before making bail or other preliminary case decisions.

A Specialized Court's Response

The Brooklyn Supreme Court Domestic Violence Part opened in the summer of 1996 as the state's first specialized court dedicated to domestic violence felonies and has since attained international recognition. It introduced a new model for handling domestic violence cases in New York State, emphasizing continuity of court and agency personnel, intensive case monitoring, defendant accountability, safety planning and greater access to services for victims. After just two years of operation, the court has achieved a probation violation rate that is

nearly half the typical rate for comparable cases. Further, the court had only three outstanding warrants at the end of 1997.

At the Brooklyn court, a resource coordinator helps monitor defendant compliance and victim safety, working with victim advocates, batterers' intervention programs, law enforcement and other off-site agencies to gather informa-

Waging WAR Against Domestic Violence



Victim advocate Ovita Williams counsels one of her clients.

* Names have been changed to protect privacy.

tion before every court appearance. The coordinator also assists in finding appropriate intervention programs for offenders, while the victim advocates offer victims counseling, comprehensive referral services and safety planning. Ovita Williams, one of several victim advocates working at the court, helps domestic violence victims like Jackie get back on their feet. "There are no easy answers, but I work with clients in every way possible to help them gain confidence and go on with their lives," Ms. Williams says.

For Dr. Jack Sarmanian, Executive Director of the New York City Alternative Assistance Program (NYCAAP)—a batterers' intervention program which handles referrals from the Brooklyn Domestic Violence Court—the complexities of domestic violence are equally challenging. "You have to deal with this problem on various levels: psychological, social, economic and so on. What we do at NYCAAP is teach clients respect—for others and for themselves—and make them take responsibility for their actions rather than placing the blame on someone else," he says.

Some NYCAAP clients stay on past their required commitment, and a few graduates of the program, like Charlie* and David*, are now NYCAAP counselors. "NYCAAP was a real eye-opener for me and made me a better person," says Charlie, who enjoys the work he is doing. David agrees that the program changed his life and says, "It made me proactive instead of reactive, and taught me to make healthier choices and take control of my life."

Addressing A Growing Problem

Heightened public awareness, changes in the law (such as mandatory arrest) and stricter enforcement have led to a drastic increase in domestic violence cases, creating an enormous challenge for the city's Criminal Court,

which handles the bulk of these cases. To ensure that each of these potentially volatile cases is treated fairly and with the sensitivity it deserves, the Unified Court System, with \$1 million in federal and state grants, has begun an ambitious plan to create specialized domestic violence courts in every borough within the New York City Criminal Court.

The Bronx Domestic Violence Court, the first of the specialized domestic violence divisions within the Criminal Court, will serve as the model for future expansion into all five boroughs of New York City, adapting the successful strategies of the Brooklyn Supreme Court Domestic Violence Part to the higher caseloads of the Criminal Court. Stressing victim safety and defendant accountability, the Bronx court will have victim advocates, an on-site monitor for defendants, and a resource coordinator to serve as a link between the court and its partner agencies. The Bronx court contains an all-purpose part (which handles post-arraignment appearances), a trial part and a compliance part, with one judge permanently assigned to each.



Dr. Jack Sarmanian talks with several NYCAAP clients during a counseling session.

Courts across New York State are working with local agencies, advocates and service providers to create more coordinated and effective responses to domestic abuse. With reduced waiting time for court appearances, a separate waiting area for victims, and special resources for victims and batterers, the Monroe County Family Court Domestic Violence Intensive Intervention Court emphasizes efficient case processing, victim safety and offender accountability. Another program, the Erie County Family Court Domestic Violence Project, is a community-based collaborative effort that provides crisis intervention and emotional support to victims, and assesses and places offenders in appropriate programs.

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If you have questions about domestic violence, want to find a victims' or batterers' program, or are interested in volunteering opportunities, please contact the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence hotline by calling **1-800-942-6906** (English) or **1-800-942-6908** (Spanish).

NOTEBOOK *continued from page 3*

police, the French courts, without being reminded that they have a whole different system of justice. It is not, to put it bluntly, as good, not nearly as good as our own. Accuse me of being chauvinistic if you like, but there it is.

In France, when there is a crime and you are accused, basically, the burden of proof is on you—to prove that you did not do it. In France, you are not, fundamentally, innocent until proven guilty. You are guilty until proven innocent. That is a big difference. Also, you are not entitled to a jury trial. Judges try you. Usually, in the beginning, one judge. This grows out of the system of law instituted by Napoleon Bonaparte now called Napoleonic law.

Our laws, U.S. laws, have their roots in English common law, but courts in Great Britain do not operate as ours do. While we owe much to the British for our system of law—including innocent until proven guilty—the American Constitution and Bill of Rights set up a whole new system of law, one with many more freedoms and guarantees of citizen rights against the state than the British enjoy, even now. No, our system . . . innocent until proven guilty, trial by jury, emphasis on rights of the accused . . . is not perfect. Far from it. But . . . it is the fairest in the world and the jury system is basic, key to it. The jury system doesn't always work. It has flaws. But, and this is the point, it does work most of the time. And key to it is individuals being available to serve on juries.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE *continued from page 5*

Other courts in upstate New York and the counties of Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester are taking innovative approaches like these in handling domestic violence cases.

A Long Road Ahead

Although times have changed since the days when it was taboo to even discuss domestic assault, family violence is a growing problem in our society that must be addressed on many levels. Working with social service providers, community groups, law enforcement and other partner agencies, the New York State court system is taking a more comprehensive and coordinated approach in responding to domestic violence. The results are promising so far, but much remains to be done in the often uphill battle against this very complex social problem which devastates so many families. ♦

New York State Unified Court System
Public Hearing Notice
THE GRAND JURY PROJECT

Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye recently appointed a committee to recommend ways of improving the grand jury process. The committee will be holding public hearings in the New York City and Albany areas in September to gather ideas for improving the grand jury system. The areas of concern include summoning, juror hardship, orientation, instructions to jurors, term of service, juror compensation, juror treatment, jury facilities and any other issues which grand jurors may have concerning their jury experience.

If you are interested in speaking at or attending one of the hearings, please call 1-800-NY-JUROR and leave your name and telephone number, home address or e-mail address. We will contact you with the date, time and location of the hearings.

If you cannot attend the hearing but would like to comment, please send your comments to:

Unified Court System
 25 Beaver Street, Room 975
 New York, NY 10004
 Attn.: Grand Jury Hearings

or

e-mail JFREEMAN@COURTS.STATE.NY.US

Jury Service With A Smile

Ask Vivian Tang, an engaging 19-year-old college student, how she spent her summer vacation, and she'll happily tell you about her internship at the Vera Institute of Justice. This was Vivian's second summer at Vera, a nonprofit organization with a long history of innovative programs relating to the administration of justice.

Together with the New York State Unified Court System, Vera created the Citizens Jury Project in 1994 to improve the experience of jury duty and include jurors in efforts to reform and strengthen the system. Recognizing the urgent need to respond to jurors' complaints and eliminate barriers to useful jury service, Vera installed its first "OmbudService" table in the New York State Supreme Court building at 60 Centre Street in April 1995. Since then, the service has been extended to three other courthouses—100 and 111 Centre Street in Manhattan and 360 Adams Street in Brooklyn—with plans for further expansion.

Vivian has staffed Vera's OmbudService tables for the past two summers, answering questions from jurors and addressing concerns over various matters ranging from postponement of service to uncomfortable physical conditions at courthouses. Helpful Vera employees and interns like Vivian have provided infor-



Vivian Tang (left) assists jurors at the Citizens Jury Project OmbudService table.

mation and assistance to thousands of New York City jurors since the OmbudService first began.

Ms. Tang, who was born in Hong Kong and came to America at age five, is fascinated with America's criminal justice system and sees herself studying law when she graduates from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she's entering her junior year as a political science and mathematics major. "My interest in the law and the justice system is what attracted me to Vera in the first place. My first summer was a great experience, so I was eager to return to Vera and the OmbudService, where I met so many wonderful people," she says.

On a hot and rainy summer morning, Vivian, smiling and smartly dressed, arrived at the 60 Centre Street courthouse, where she was approached by jurors with various questions. She helped a woman who needed

advice concerning a friend summoned for jury duty, heard a complaint from a first-time juror, gave directions to a third person and answered one juror's questions about the OmbudService itself. Says Ms. Tang, "We document all complaints and suggestions—which has led to actual improvements like cleaner bathrooms, better lighting and even installing a coffee bar at the 60 Centre Street courthouse. This year, I got fewer complaints about physical conditions at the courthouses and received many more compliments about the jury system. I also noticed a broader cross section of jurors with the recent expansion of the jury pool."

Formed in 1961, Vera is dedicated to making government policies fairer, more humane and efficient. Vera's Manhattan Bail Project changed the way in which bail and custody decisions are

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COURTSIDE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

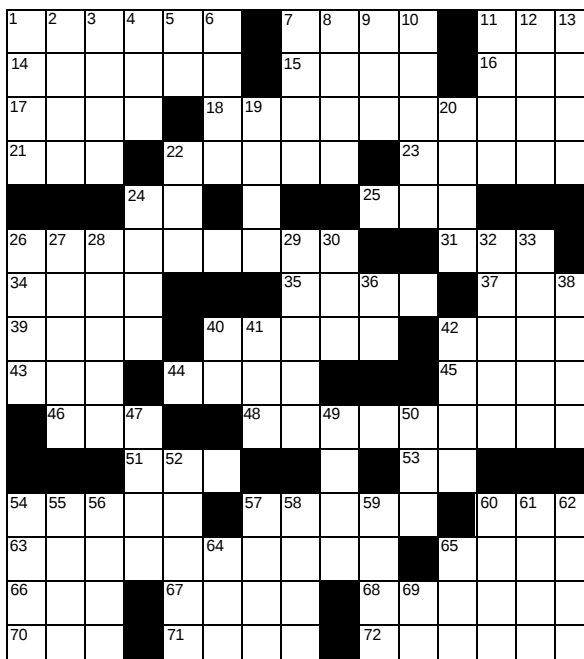
1. Serious offenders
7. Musical symbol
11. Large tub
14. Street
15. Greeting, in Madrid
16. Bullfight cheer
17. Copenhagen native
18. Written record of court proceedings
21. Suffix for a superlative
22. That place
23. Concise
24. ___ or die
25. Curvy letter
26. Isolate a deliberating jury
31. Roofing material
34. Shade of blue
35. Statutes
37. Deep sleep: abbr.
39. Gasoline
40. Polish
42. ___ *Fan Tutte*, Mozart opera
43. Lend an ___, listen
44. Legal action
45. Leave out
46. Caustic substance
48. Party in 44-Across
51. Back talk: slang
53. Like
54. Divided
57. Father

60. CDs of yesteryear
63. District attorney
65. Jail or ___
66. Family member, for short
67. Word with "light" or "struck"
68. Hooked up to a computer
70. Monogram of celebrated French designer
71. Mediocre: hyphenated word
72. Like some plants

DOWN

1. Lose color
2. Miss Gabor and namesakes
3. Fasting period
4. Single
5. Greek letter
6. Eve's son
7. Burn
8. Solitary
9. Overhead trains
10. The jury determines these
11. ___ dire
12. High mountains
13. Head, to a Parisian
19. What tenants pay
20. Take a breather
22. Foot part
24. Double
26. Secure
27. ___ Rights Amendment
28. Pose a question
29. Crème de la crème
30. Participated in a race
32. Scent

33. Varnish ingredient
36. ___, the people
38. Baseball need
40. Start of the week, for short
41. Concealed
42. A kind of fish: plural
47. Actor Wallach and others
49. Name for a loyal pet
50. Negative vote
52. Articles
54. Nimble
55. Clinton's title, for short
56. Be lazy
57. Pairs
58. ___ extra cost, for the same price: 2 words
59. Word with "rain" or "tear"
60. Café au ___, espresso-bar order
61. Evergreen
62. Snow vehicle
64. Make a dove's sound
65. Sandwich order, for short
69. See 50-Down



JURY SERVICE continued from page 7

made in criminal courts nationwide, proving that people with little money but verifiable ties to their communities could be safely released while awaiting trial. The 1966 Bail Reform Act—the first reform of the federal bail system since 1789—and the pre-trial services developed by Vera ended the exploitation of low-income families by bail bondsmen, while Vera's 1975 Victim/Witness Assistance Project improved the justice system's treatment of crime victims. More recently, Vera assisted the Midtown Community Court in developing state-of-the-art computer technology that gives judges vital information needed to impose meaningful sentences for low-level offenders and is an integral part of the court's community-oriented approach (see story on page 1). Current Vera projects include a

program that helps people with developmental disabilities lead more independent and productive lives, the LaBodega crisis center for drug abusers and their families who live on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and a summer program that introduces high school students to the criminal justice system through court visits and other opportunities.

Vera has a 24-hour hotline, (212) 233-5520, to assist jurors throughout New York City with problems and questions relating to jury service and also maintains a web site with information for jurors at www.vera.org/jury. Jurors throughout New York State who have inquiries, concerns or comments about jury service can call the state court system's 24-hour hotline (800-NY-JUROR) for assistance. ♦