

# Safe and Supportive Nei



## SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS OUTCOME TEAM ROSTER

**The Hon. Jeffrey E. Froelich**  
Montgomery County  
Common Pleas Court  
Champion

**Wanda Beamer**  
Dayton Municipal Court

**Louis Q. Fries**  
Dayton Municipal Court

**The Hon. Cynthia M. Heck**  
Vandalia Municipal Court

**The Hon. Carl S. Henderson**  
Dayton Municipal Court

**Jacquelyn Jackson**  
Dayton Municipal Court

**Deirdre Logan, Esq.**  
City of Dayton, Department of Law

**Leonard Oram**  
Vandalia Municipal Court

**Terrance Sledge**  
Dayton Municipal Court/  
Vandalia Municipal Court  
10/07 to Present

**Claudia Turrell, Esq.**  
Vandalia Municipal Court

### STAFF:

**Joe Spittler**  
Montgomery County  
Criminal Justice Council

## VISION

People live in safe, affordable housing. They have access to positive educational and cultural experiences. Recreational centers are conveniently located and staff serve as positive role models, especially for the children. All aspects of the environment—e.g., air, water, soil—are safe and healthy. The community values the unique attributes of each neighborhood, whether rural or urban.

## SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS OUTCOME TEAM REPORT

In 2006 the FCFC, acting on a recommendation from the Safe Neighborhoods Outcome Team, approved start-up funding for the first two years of operation of a Safe Neighborhoods Court. Project implementation began in October of that year. The first twelve months of the program are the subject of this report.

### Background

Before making its recommendation the Outcome Team had examined misdemeanor arrest statistics in the county and found that a relatively small number of individuals (fifteen) were responsible for over 270 separate arrests in 2005. On average that was over five arrests per week throughout the year. This was clearly a drain on law enforcement and judicial resources as well as a chronic nuisance to the neighborhoods frequented by these people.

The goal of the Safe Neighborhoods Court is to improve the quality of life in these neighborhoods by focusing on the relatively small group of individuals responsible for most of the negative contacts. To achieve this goal a special court docket was established jointly by Dayton and Vandalia Municipal Courts. In addition, a Safe Neighborhoods Court Probation Officer has been hired to provide intensive supervision to these individuals.

It is important to note that the Court does not target any of these individuals for arrest and prosecution. Instead, once one of them is arrested and convicted, the Court works closely with these individuals to lessen their further involvement in the criminal justice system.

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## Statistics – First Twelve Months

Between October 2006 and October 2007 the Safe Neighborhoods Court screened 60 defendants. The screening process includes doing a background check, examining arrest records and mental health history, determining the person's current life situation, and collecting information from the complainant(s). As a result of this screening, 21 defendants were considered not amenable or not appropriate for the Safe Neighborhoods Program. Of the remaining 39 defendants, 22 were revoked or terminated due to non-compliance during the program's first twelve months. Of the remaining 17 defendants there were arrest warrants for two of them at the time that the data for this report were prepared. Three of the remaining 15 defendants successfully completed the Safe Neighborhoods Court program during the Court's first twelve months and twelve were active at the end of that time.

## The Heart of the Program: The Relationship Between the Probation Officer and the Defendants

It should be clear, from this recounting of its first twelve months, that the Safe Neighborhoods Program deals with a highly volatile population, one which requires constant monitoring and reassessment of the individual needs of

each defendant in the program. On several occasions, the Probation Officer has been asked to be in more than one place and to handle more than one problem at the same time. Each defendant's needs change daily, if not hourly.

In an excellent effort to meet the defendants' needs and stabilize them, the Probation Officer has far exceeded what is expected of a probation officer and has incorporated vast social work skills into his daily routine.

As an example, the Probation Officer drove to Springfield, Ohio in order to help a defendant acquire his birth certificate. That led to a trip to the Social Security Administration to obtain a social security number, which enabled the defendant to acquire a State ID. This action, which consumed the better part of the day, allowed the defendant to open a bank account, necessary for direct deposit of his Social Security Check.

The Probation Officer has been able to improve communication between the Probation Office and outside agencies. He has also taken action to cut through red tape and roadblocks which inhibited the defendant from acquiring needed services. An example of such action can be seen by the way the Probation Officer handled the problem of a clogged drain. The defendant's apartment was uninhabitable

due to the stench coming out of his clogged kitchen drain. Despite the efforts of the case manager, who was assured the problem would be resolved, the drain remained clogged for several weeks. The Probation Officer went directly to the Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority (DMHA) and the drain was fixed that same day.

The same defendant was admitted to Twin Valley Psychiatric Center so he could become stabilized on his medication. When it was time to release the defendant, his case manager and Twin Valley were under the impression he no longer had an apartment at DMHA. The Probation Officer was able to talk to DMHA and eliminate the confusion, thus assuring the defendant still had a place to live.

The above are a few examples of the Safe Neighborhoods Probation Officer's extra involvement with the defendants. His other efforts include, but are not limited to, taking them shopping, redirecting their buying priorities, driving them to their treatment programs, and helping them access community resources.

The Outcome Team believes that the efforts made by the Safe Neighborhoods Probation Officer on behalf of the defendants have resulted in improving the quality of their life in small increments. He has afforded several of them the



opportunity to acquire a State ID—something they had previously been unable to do. This small but important move has opened up new possibilities for each of the defendants.

The Probation Officer has demonstrated an exceptional ability to relate to the defendants. The level of trust between the Officer and the defendants has been witnessed on more than one occasion. For instance, when a defendant was admitted to Twin Valley, he refused to speak to anyone. When the Probation Officer arrived at Twin Valley to check on the defendant, he was told the first words the defendant spoke were to the Probation Officer. The Probation Officer was able to break through the defendant's defenses and facilitate communication and cooperation between the defendant and the professional staff.

### Reducing Arrests and Jail Days

An important aspect of the program was to help reduce jail overcrowding as much as possible. To this end the Outcome Team has found that the individuals who cooperated with the Program have demonstrated a definite decrease in new arrests and jail time.

As an example consider Joe (not his real name). In the nine months prior to entering the program he was arrested four times and served 47 days in jail. In the nine months after he entered, he had zero arrests and zero jail days. Although Joe's may be an exceptional case, it does demonstrate that for some defendants the goal of no further arrests is obtainable. In fact, looking at a sample of over a dozen clients for the time period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007 reveals that collectively they had 562 jail

days before entering and after leaving the program and only 154 jail days while their cases were open, i.e., while they were in the Safe Neighborhoods Program.

In addition, while the Probation Officer is in the field he often comes across defendants who are at risk of getting into difficulties with the police. At these times he takes them home and takes them out of harm's way. This in turn reduces police interaction, most likely preventing additional arrests, incarceration and jail days.

### Community Agencies

The Probation Officer has also developed a positive relationship with the social service agencies that work with the defendants. Providing transportation to and from their facilities and to other agencies or to the hospital, to the library and/or to the grocery store can save the agencies' case managers hours of case coverage. This has been greatly appreciated by agencies such as Day-Mont Behavioral Health Care, Nova House, Eastway and the Center for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Services (CADAS).

### The Effect on Neighborhoods

Dealing with a population with mental health issues and experiencing troubled times, the Safe Neighborhoods Probation Officer brings sporadic periods of stability to their lives and to the community. His efforts have been a deterrent, preventing the defendant from creating additional problems in the community. All individuals in the Safe Neighborhoods Program are part of the community; therefore, even the smallest stabilizing addition to their lives ultimately results in a positive overflow to

## SUPPORTIVE AND ENGAGED NEIGHBORHOODS OUTCOME TEAM ROSTER

**Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., Ph.D.**  
University of Dayton Fitz Center  
Champion

**David A. Cleavenger**  
City of Dayton

**Gregory D. Johnson, PHM**  
Dayton Metropolitan  
Housing Authority

**Marc R. Levy, MSW**  
United Way of the  
Greater Dayton Area

### STAFF:

**Robert L. Stoughton**  
University of Dayton Fitz Center,  
OFCF

## SUPPORTIVE AND ENGAGED NEIGHBORHOODS OUTCOME TEAM REPORT

In December 2006, the Supportive and Engaged Neighborhoods Outcome Team made a number of recommendations to the FCFC. These recommendations were discussed in the 2006 Progress Report and included the following:

- that the FCFC begin building support for a collaborative effort that focuses on a small, manageable number of neighborhoods;
- that the FCFC integrate the work of the other Outcome Teams around neighborhoods and develop a “Theory of Action” for building supportive and engaged neighborhoods;
- that 50% of the funds awarded through the Supported Services Fund be directed to agencies with projects that are part of one or more of the neighborhood initiatives;
- that other key partners also make a commitment of discretionary funds to the neighborhoods; and
- that the first initiative to build a supportive and engaged neighborhood should begin in the fall of 2008.

In developing these recommendations the Team launched a community conversation that included neighborhood forums and meetings with key stakeholders in the community. In its December 2006 report to the FCFC, the Team pledged to continue that conversation.

In 2007, the Team kept the conversation going as it worked to develop consensus around the importance of building supportive and engaged neighborhoods.

After all, as the Team said in last year’s report, this work “is not easy and will not happen overnight.”

It also will not happen all at once in all neighborhoods. For that reason the Team was especially deliberate about building consensus around the recommendation to start with a small number of neighborhoods. This will make the initiative manageable and will give the FCFC and its partners the opportunity to learn by doing.

In these conversations the Team has emphasized its belief that neighborhoods with discernible assets, i.e., neighborhoods with a possibility of success, should be the initial focus. Especially attractive to the Team and to the FCFC are those neighborhoods that are home to one of the schools in Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers project, Cleveland School, Edison School, Fairview School, Kiser School and—after construction is completed in 2008—Ruskin School.

In 2008, the conversation within the FCFC and with its partners will continue. The Supportive and Engaged Neighborhood Team will continue to raise two questions with the FCFC:

- “Since we are all convinced that we need all the desired community outcomes in our neighborhoods, especially the distressed neighborhoods, should we not develop several multi-outcome initiatives in specific neighborhoods?”; and
- “If so, should we not focus major discretionary expenditures of FCFC on these multi-outcome initiatives?”