

## THE WAY IT HAS BEEN

Community service programs that require offenders to give unpaid service to the community are a common feature of the justice system. By both legal definition and general understanding in the community, this service is seen as a punishment for the crimes committed.

This view greatly limits the potential value community service has to offer victims, the community and offenders. This view too often results in creating an attitude in offenders that they are doing community service only because the judge or their probation officer is making them do it. They may see little, or no, connection between the harm they have caused and the service they are providing. They may leave the service experience feeling they have wasted their time or that they have been “victimized”, or treated unfairly, by the justice system.

This outcome of community service is of limited or no benefit for victims, the community or the offenders.

It does not have to be this way. There are rich opportunities for community service to achieve very meaningful outcomes. These outcomes can be achieved when community service is done **restoratively**.

## RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service is done restoratively when it enables offenders to see their service as:

- **a personal obligation**, not a punishment.
- **an opportunity to make right**, even if only symbolically, the wrong they have done.
- **work that is valued** by victims and/or the community.

And then in addition to holding offenders **accountable** for their crimes, **Restorative Community Service** provides them with the opportunity to be **integrated** into the community as people capable of making a positive contribution. This integration creates **change** in both the offender and the community.

While a community service experience may be limited in time, the value it has in holding offenders meaningfully accountable and in communicating to them that they can be positive members of the community should not be underestimated.

## HOW DOES IT WORK ?

Crucial to making community service **restorative** is **preparation**.

Community members and organizations are provided information and support from the justice system. This enables them to take on an active partnership role working with juvenile offenders on community initiated projects. Offenders are prepared through intentional conversations with justice system staff. Staff help offenders to understand their community

service as both a personal obligation and an opportunity to make amends for harms done.

With the support of the Restorative Community Service Coordinator, community groups identify meaningful projects where **juvenile offenders can work side by side with volunteers from the community**.

An offender working in isolation, or only with other offenders, minimizes the value of community service. Projects that enable offenders to work in partnership with community members create opportunities for meaningful **accountability, integration and change**.

Community organizations help by providing these opportunities. They also provide the **personal contacts and relationships** (i.e. mentoring and role modeling) that **are the crucial difference in making community service truly restorative**.

## HOW DO VICTIMS BENEFIT?

Restorative Community Service focuses on both the accountability of offenders and on changing their future behavior and thinking. These objectives are viewed by many victims as the two most important goals for our justice system. They want offenders to learn from the offense and to never again victimize other people. In addition, victims of crime have voiced a desire to see offenders become better people, people who will contribute in positive ways to the community.

## RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Accountability
- Integration
- Change

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Provide a project, large or small, where an appropriate young offender may work along side other volunteer community members to accomplish a meaningful task.

Work alongside a young offender, not as a supervisor or boss, but as a community co-worker. Engage them in conversation, work *with* them, and encourage and commend good work.

Give of yourself. You are the greatest asset this community has to address crime in an effective and meaningful way. Holding offenders accountable, by having them contribute service of value, and thereby drawing these offenders into the fabric of the community, is one of our most effective long-term crime prevention responses. No one can do that job better than you, the people of Clark County.

If you would like more information about Restorative Community Service please contact Sean Scrivner at  
360-397-2201 ext. 4057



Building homes for low-income families with Habitat for Humanity



# Restorative Community Service



4-H CASEE Center Organic Gardens growing food for local food banks

**Accountability**

**Integration**

**Change**



FOR ALTERNATIVE FORMATS  
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