



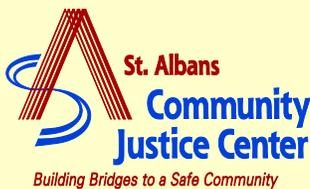
BUILDING BRIDGES

The Newsletter of the St. Albans Community Justice Center

Newsletter Date
Volume 1 Issue 1

February 2012
Volume 2 Issue 1

'Three Questions' About Parallel Justice



"It is in our interest as a nation to help victims of crime. The justice we seek will also produce a safer society."

Susan Herman

In response to community needs, the St. Albans Community Justice Center, the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, and local law enforcement have combined efforts to launch the Parallel Justice Program. Already well established in Burlington, Parallel Justice is an integrated community response to the needs of crime victims. It recognizes that victims' needs cannot entirely be addressed by the criminal justice system and offers additional options to help victims feel safe in their communities and get their lives back on track.

Our first step was establishing a tire and windshield replacement program that assists victims of auto vandalism. With the support of local business, victims will be able to have their vehicles repaired quickly and not suffer crippling disruption to their lives. We hope to build on tire and windshield replacement to create a community-wide response that can support victims with a variety of needs, regardless of whether the offender is caught or prosecuted. Parallel Justice operates by assuming a responsibility to acknowledge harm to a community member, and a responsibility to mend that harm.

This issue of Building Bridges is dedicated to the Parallel Justice Program and includes diverse perspectives on the program's purpose and potential. The Parallel Justice Program is being coordinated by Lara Ivins, a UVM intern who has been working with the Community Justice Center since September. Lara has begun reaching out to victims of Franklin County auto vandalism while considering additional Parallel Justice Initiatives. Lara also assembled this newsletter. Thanks to Lara for her dedication to this new program of the St. Albans Community Justice Center.

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Three Questions for Chief Gary Taylor

Gary Taylor, Police Chief of St. Albans

Police Chief Gary Taylor



“The day after I reported the crime, my windshield was replaced. I was incredibly relieved that help existed.”
(Burlington Vandalism Victim)

Q: Why is the Parallel Justice Program important for St. Albans?

A: It recognizes the personal harm suffered by the victim and seeks to address the victim’s issues and bring closure to matters that fall by the wayside in our criminal justice system. A system that is intimidating and overwhelmed.

Q: How do you see the Parallel Justice Program supporting the work of your officers?

A: St. Albans Police Officers handle approximately 8,000 calls for service per year and are responsible for traffic enforcement, public safety in general and often do not have the time or resources at their disposal to meet the psychological needs of many of the victims of crime in our area. The Parallel Justice Program is a fully vested partner in this community’s efforts to meet the needs of the victims of crime in our area, provide them a voice, recognize and restore their dignity and locate resources that will assist in this endeavor.

Q: How do you see your officers supporting the work of the Parallel Justice Program?

A: St. Albans Police Officers often see individuals who have little or no resources to compensate for their loss and their ability to recover from the damages suffered by them. The Parallel Justice Program seeks assistance for the victim(s) and provides nontraditional resources for those victims.

Three Questions for Susan Herman

Susan Herman, author of Parallel Justice for Victims of Crime and founder of the Parallel Justice Movement

Q: Why did you come to do this work?

A: I came to believe that while the traditional criminal justice process should definitely be more victim-oriented-- and that victims' experience of it could improve--the criminal justice process is fundamentally about offenders, and probably would never meet many of victims' needs. I also felt traditional victim services couldn't be expected to provide all the services and resources victims deserve, and that our social service, mental health, legal services, and healthcare systems needed to be much more responsive to victims' needs.

Q: How did you develop the idea of Parallel Justice?

A: Instead of starting with the existing criminal justice response which tends to define justice for victims as a conviction, or the traditional victim services which offer a fairly limited menu of services, I asked what is it victims need in the aftermath of crime, and how can our government and communities work together to help victims rebuild their lives. Based on my own work with victims, and the rich experience of advocates all over the country, I developed the ten Parallel Justice principles to provide a similar framework to guide our societal response to victims. I coined the term Parallel Justice to emphasize that our responses to victims can be independent of, and contemporaneous with, our responses to offenders. Victims shouldn't feel that their access to services depends on whether an offender has been identified or prosecuted. Similarly, we shouldn't limit assistance to the duration of a trial.

Q: Ideally, how does Parallel Justice operate within a community?

A: Parallel Justice must be viewed as part of a community-wide response to crime. When government and community-based agencies follow the Parallel Justice principles, victims' safety becomes a high priority, and regardless of whether their cases result in a prosecution of an offender, victims of any kind of crime are offered both immediate and ongoing support, compensation for their losses, practical assistance, and an opportunity to be heard. Enforcing victims' rights also becomes a high priority and it is clear that seeking justice for victims is not just the responsibility of victim advocates or the traditional criminal justice process. Comprehensive Parallel Justice initiatives amplify victims' voices and lead to systemic change. I look forward to working with many of you to find the best ways to create Parallel Justice in St. Albans!



Susan Herman

"Parallel Justice Staff were clearly interested in making things whole again. It helped restore my faith in the community."

(Burlington Vandalism Victim)

Three Questions for Clark Sheldon

Clark Sheldon, Parallel Justice Specialist in Burlington.

“...Providing the space to be heard and listened to is a service that did not exist in any formal way in Burlington before Parallel Justice.”

Clark Sheldon

Q: What are some of the ways that you support people affected by crime?

A: One size fits all is such an exclusionary and limiting approach whether we're talking about shopping for t-shirts or, providing information, support and resources. The overarching way I approach supporting individuals affected by crime is to help that person reflect on, identify and prioritize what would be the most helpful thing (or things)-- such as financial or other resources, safety planning, information or referrals to other services, just being able to talk or vent about how they feel--in response to the crime committed against them. Hopefully, what we come up with together is *a start* on the path towards healing and recovery after crime. Each individual is the expert in his/her own healing and recovery. What I offer in terms of support looks different in each situation- there is no 'typical' need, or a typical reaction to crime and therefore the support response is flexible and often multi-faceted.

Q: Do you have any favorite examples?

A: When I'm on the phone with a person and we are discussing what happened and the impact of it-- for example, car vandalism-- I may offer a variety of services from financial assistance to repair the car tires to considering a variety of safety enhancements in the parking lot where the crime occurred. During the course of the conversation what we come to settle on is the process of simply having the conversation itself. It's sometimes that simple. And providing the space to be heard and be listened to is a service that did not exist in any formal way in Burlington before Parallel Justice.

Q: Why do you do Parallel Justice?

A: Giving back to individuals in my community is one of the most fulfilling ways I know to nurture human connections, grow compassion for myself and others while supporting and nurturing the resilience and tools that all of us already have within ourselves. What survivors of crime teach me about strength and resilience reaches far beyond the beginning and end points of our work together.

“They were very kind and listened to me. It was very comforting to know they were there when I needed them.”

(Burlington Assault Victim)