

LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

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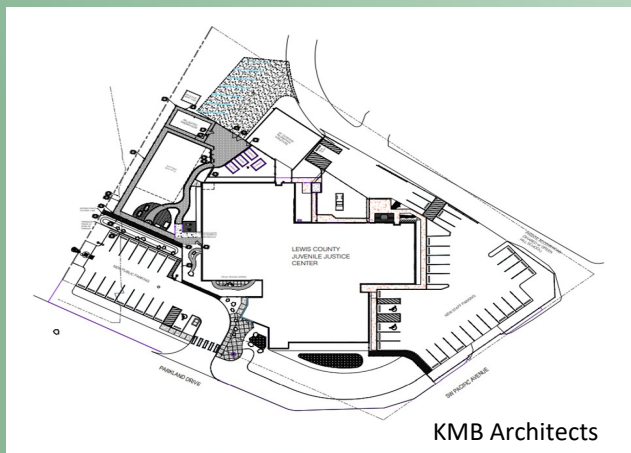
Juvenile Court Renovation Project



The Lewis County Juvenile Justice Center was built in 1978 and is reportedly the oldest juvenile court and detention facility in the state of Washington still with the original footprint... but not for much longer. As part of Lewis County's Capital Facilities Plan, beginning in the fall of 2021 the facility

will begin undergoing a major transformation with over 5,500 square feet of new construction and substantial renovation to the current facility. The goals of this project include substantial expansion of programming and service provider space to allow for even more opportunities for our youth and families, creating a more therapeutic atmosphere within our detention facility, providing office space for our staff, and improving the efficiency and security of the public spaces.

We at the Juvenile Court are incredibly excited to be moving towards finally having the available space to match the vision we have for new opportunities to further engage with our youth, families, and community. Although it will be incredibly challenging to relocate our probation department and detention facility during this construction project, we are confident that upon completion we will be positioned to have even greater success in our mission.



Inside this issue

- Art Education 2
- School Engagement 3
- A Voice in Court 4
- Restorative Justice 5
- Meet the Team 6

Look for in the next issue

- Evolution of Juvenile Probation
- Employment and Education Training
- Guardian Friends of Lewis County
- And more!

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Lewis County Juvenile Court is to hold youth accountable, provide for community safety consistent with statutory mandates and to provide caring professional services to juveniles and their families, equipping them to become responsible citizens.

Bringing Art Education to the Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center

Art has the wonderful ability to allow an individual to express themselves without the use of words.

On Friday, June 4, 2021, the staff at the Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center held the first art class. This idea was presented by Detention Supervisor Kellie Wright. Kellie shared the experience with fellow court employees stating, “This was the first weekend of our “Bob Ross” painting nights. We used this weekend to experiment with different ways that all staff can lead this program even if they, themselves are not artistic. I am happy to report that all three nights were very successful. I knew that the youth would have fun with painting but I also heard from all of the youth that their anxiety was greatly reduced as well as experiencing a sense of peace.” The weekend consisted of detention staff teaching the youth about Bob Ross and his artwork, how to paint freestyle/ abstract and how to follow an instruction lead painting session. Once the paintings dry, each are placed within the youth’s personal belongings so the youth can bring the artwork home with them upon release.



“My time doing art and painting while I was in the Juvenile Facility was really calming. It made me relaxed and feel better. It was also a fun experience and I think it would help a lot of other kids other than me. It’s really cool doing something different that makes you feel better and to create your own piece of art is really cool.” 15 year old (he/his)

According to Bridges to Recovery, a residential health care provider, “Art therapy exercises help foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, [and] reduce and resolve conflicts and distress.”

In her book *Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy: Brain, Body, and Imagination in the Healing Process*, Cathy Malchiodi, research psychologist, clinical mental health counselor, wrote, “Neurobiology continues to inform mental health professionals about why specific art-based activities, within the context of therapy, may be helpful to children. In particular, certain sensory characteristics of art making seem to be effective in improving mood, sensory integration, and calming the body and mind, especially with children who have experienced traumatic events.

Currently 88.9% of all youth being actively supervised on probation with the Lewis County Juvenile Court are attending and/or prescribed mental health treatment in the form of medication and/or counseling.

“I like this program because it helps with my anxiety and it helps me with my stress so I love this program and I hope it stays in place!” 15 year old (he/his)



Pathways to Engagement: Getting Youth Back to School



Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

When COVID hit, it didn't take long before the office phones at the Juvenile Court began to ring. On the other end of the line were exhausted parents, concerned school staff, and social workers. "I am a single parent and I work during the hours that my 8 year old is supposed to attend school through zoom. I just don't know what to do." "I've tried everything... I've taken everything away.. I just can't get her to

log in and do her schoolwork." "We have called all the numbers that we have for the family and we can't reach anyone. The students haven't been enrolled into school yet and it is November." "I have been working with this family for a few months and now I can't locate them. Do you know if they are enrolled in school anywhere?"

It might not have been within the typical role of a Probation Officer, but the response remained consistent, "How can I help?"

October 27, 2020, Toledo High School contacted Probation Officer Megan Shepherd regarding a student. She was able to locate the student in another county and followed up to make sure he was enrolled and attending school. November 20, 2020, Mossyrock High School reached out to Megan for assistance. She drove out to the student's home and discovered there was an internet issue and the youth had been trying to do school with a hotspot from a cellphone. Megan worked with the school to solve the issue. It didn't take long before multiple school districts were working in partnership with the Juvenile Court to locate and engage students back into school.

James Bowers from Centralia School district reported:

"Megan and I spent time on Wednesdays visiting homes of students who were not attending school in-person and or online within Centralia School District. We came across many reasons as to why a student was not attending, from the student is no longer living at a given address to the family does not want their children attending in-person school to poor internet access. Then we used this feedback to work with schools and the district to help students attend through providing hotspot access devices, to walking students through the steps of re-enrollment, to insisting with parents that schools can help and to please make contact."

Since October 2020, Megan assisted 19 schools and helped locate/engage 147 students into school that had not been attending/engaging since the closures of school in March of 2020. She is always thinking of ways to help families and recently received 18 donated alarm clocks from Chehalis Walmart in an effort to help students wake on time for school this coming Fall.

"If anything has come out of this year with Megan, it is that although problems arise there is always some solution. Sometimes the solution is not what parents/students want but we were consistent with our messages: Go to school and how can we help?"

-James Bowers, Futurus High School Administrator/Teacher

School Closure Timeline

February 27, 2020– Bothell High School was the first school in the United States to shut down.

March 5, 2020– Northshore School District was the first school district to shift to virtual learning.

March 11, 2020: Pandemic Declared

March 17, 2020– All schools in Washington State were closed.

March 25, 2020– All schools in the United States were closed.

April 6, 2020– All schools in Washington State were ordered closed until Fall.

May 7, 2020– Virtual School became the normal.

June 19, 2020– Summer Break

September 4, 2020– New start of the school year; Virtual

According to Office Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI), enrollment at public schools in Washington state has declined by about 31,000 students compared to last year, mostly because of the coronavirus pandemic, a report said.

Chronic absence — missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspensions, can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.

"Children are not just grieving death, but the loss of stability, safety, and graduation ... children grieve those other losses as well."
—David Schonfeld, a leading national expert on school crisis management, on understanding and responding to student grief. "

A Voice in Court: Children in the Foster Care System

History of the CASA Program

In 1977, a Seattle juvenile court judge was concerned that making drastic decisions with insufficient information conceived the idea of citizen volunteers speaking up for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom. That first CASA program has grown a network of more than 951 CASA and guardian ad litem programs that are recruiting, training and supporting volunteers in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

Since approximately 1984, the Lewis County Juvenile Court has been training volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), also known as Guardian ad Litem (GALs) to be the voice for abused and neglected children within the foster care system. The assigned volunteer is appointed by the court to conduct an independent investigation and to give recommendations as to placement, visitation and services.

On May 8, 1984, at the Lewis County Superior Court, a ten month old baby was given a voice in court when a GAL was assigned to represent the best interests of the child. Since that day, 2,223 children have been represented by trained volunteers from our community.

The Lewis County GAL Program provides quality court-based advocacy for abused and neglected children. Children are referred to our program from the court once a child is taken into protective custody. GAL volunteers are matched to a case where their skills and training will benefit the children most. GAL volunteers work to get their child's court case expedited in addition to helping the child they're working with find permanency sooner.

There are currently 153 children in foster care in Lewis County. The goal of the GAL Program is to appoint a volunteer GAL to represent each of these children. The program currently has 34 GALs and is looking for more community members to help be a voice for these children. The Juvenile Court is currently offering on-line core trainings. The next course starts in July and then again in September. For more information on how you can help an abused or neglected child please go to lewiscountygala.com.



Keep an eye out for information on this year's Reunification Day!

Family Recovery Court

Family Recovery Court, a therapeutic court designed to help reunite families in which parents have lost custody of children because of substance abuse.

Success Story

Stephanie Miller, the Family Recovery Court Program Manager received a phone call from a former relative placement of a child who's parents had both graduated from the program and was reunified with their child. The relative placement reported that the mother had recently been promoted at work and the father has continued to have a steady employment as well. The relative placement also shared that the family recently had been approved to purchase a home.

"She was almost in tears, just thanking us for bringing her daughter back to her. Those phone calls are always awesome to get, so I had to share!! We are so lucky, we get to see miracles daily—participants and graduates choosing life over death! Keep up the awesome work!"

*-Stephanie Miller, Program Manager
Drug Court & Family Recovery Court*



41 Years of Restorative Justice

Previous Work Crews

In the United Kingdom, Parliament enacted legislation in the early 1970's giving the courts specific powers to order community service as a sentencing sanction, and not just a condition of probation. Community service grew as part of the probation scheme and probation officers were delegated sole responsibility of securing support for and organizing community service programs. As community service programs garnered public support, some speculated that the reparative element provided the attraction.*

Since 1980, the Lewis County Juvenile Court has been supervising the Juvenile Work Crew Program as a way for youth to repair the harm caused to the community. Community service through the Work Crew Program is not intended to be punitive, but provides accountability while focusing on creating community connections, teaching work ethic, acquiring new skills, and providing youth a sense of accomplishment and ownership in their community.

Rain or shine, you will find Jerry Elliott, Community Service Officer with the Juvenile Court, out on a Work Crew site teaching youth about accountability through hard work, stories of morals and virtues, and positive praise for a job well done.

Carlisle Lake in Onalaska
SWW Fairgrounds
Toledo Senior Center
Veteran's Memorial Museum
Chehalis River Basin
Port of Chehalis
White Pass Historical Society
Lewis and Clark State Park
Youth Advocacy Center
Valhalla Canine Rescue
Lewis County Solid Waste
City of Pe Ell
City of Winlock
Fern Hill Cemetery
City of Napavine
And many more!

"I feel like work crew gives us the opportunity to exercise our skillset:

- A. *Teamwork*
- B. *Strategy*
- C. *Hard work*
- D. *Perseverance*
- E. *Seeing the outcome of a job well done*

I, for one have never been one who works well with people. I'm more of a solo worker but working with kids in the Work Crew is easy."

- 15 year old (she/her)



Before picture of a gravesite at the Fern Hill Cemetery



After picture

"We met many people today. I cracked the kids up when I told a camper a wild bear story & the camper believed every word right up to the time I smiled & said I was only kidding. This opened the door to share with the kids the value of making new friends sometimes is found in a bull story. This was another crew of no bad language."

- Jerry Elliott, Lewis County Juvenile Court Community Service Officer

*<http://restorativejustice.org/>

The Lewis County Juvenile Court

Many people don't know that the Lewis County Juvenile Court is comprised

Of three departments:

- Juvenile Detention
- Juvenile Probation
- Guardian Ad Litem

Three departments, One Team!

Meet the Team



After many years of service, Detention Manager Charles West retired. On May 1, 2021, the Juvenile Court welcomed the new Juvenile Detention Manager, Vanessa Conwell. Prior to becoming the Detention Manager, Vanessa started her career with the Juvenile Court as a Casual Detention Officer. Over the span of 14 years, she went from a Casual Detention Officer to the Regular Part-time Detention Officer, to a full-time Detention Officer, to a Detention Supervisor and now the Manager.

"Favorite Memory...I don't know of a specific favorite memory... no shortage of entertaining times back here in detention, whether it is something a kid says or something staff does to lift each other's spirits.

Outside of work I enjoy, hiking, camping, kayaking, riding my horses, running and spending time with my Grandbaby."

Interested in Joining the Team?

Apply online at:
<http://jobs.lewiscounty.gov>

Juvenile Detention Officer (Casual On-Call)		
Department	Superior Court - Juvenile Detention	Documents
Job Type	On Call	Job Description Juvenile Detention Officer Casual Job Posting
Pay Range	\$22.25/hr.	Apply Online
Opens / Closes	Open until filled	
Notes	Employment standards are those posted in the job posting.	

Juvenile Detention Officer (Regular Part-Time)		
Department	Superior Court - Juvenile Detention	Documents
Job Type	Part-Time Regular	Juvenile Detention Officer Job Posting Juvenile Detention Officer Job Description
Pay Range	\$3,857-\$5,186/month	Apply Online
Opens / Closes	Open until filled	
Notes	Employment standards are those posted in the job	