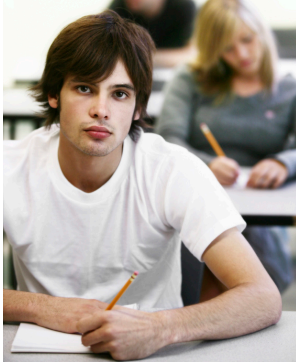


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A new publication of the  
Student Skills for Life program.

# Justice Connection

## WHEN WARNINGS AREN'T ENOUGH



*She lay in bed fighting sleep so that she could be awake when her 17 year-old son arrived home after his night out with friends. Instead, she entered every parent's nightmare as the phone rang. "Your son was in a very serious accident, and we need you to come to the hospital immediately", said the doctor on the other end.*

*Although this mother was never informed, her son had been caught drinking and driving a few weeks before the late night phone call from the hospital. Since he was a popular varsity athlete, he was let off with a*

*warning. It was his lucky night. . . or so he thought.*

Contrary to popular belief, consequences from the justice system can be a gift. Our information and referral call lines are filled with parents repeating the same refrain: "He hasn't been arrested, so we're told there's nothing we can do." The juvenile justice system can open the door for additional services to adolescents such as counseling, substance abuse treatment, or life skills classes. These programs are available to any teen, but are often underutilized until a judge or probation officer makes a referral.

Lancaster County's Office of Juvenile Probation (OJP) is one example. The OJP has recently received a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to create an Evening Reporting Center (ERC), for moderate-risk males ages 14-17 who would otherwise be held in detention while awaiting trial. The ERC will allow youth from the School District of Lancaster to attend school, remain at home, and build valuable skills while going through the court process.

The ERC will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Lancaster, weekday evenings from 4-9 p.m. beginning in August of 2010. Programming, provided by Diakon Youth Services, will include anger management, moral development, basic independent living skills, and tutoring. The ERC model has been deemed a "promising practice" by the federal government as it both provides skills to youth and keeps their incarceration times down, and is being used by counties all over the U.S. The state grant making the Lancaster program possible comes from federal economic stimulus package monies.

Teens will be electronically monitored during this pre-disposition period, usually 30-50 days in length. The monitoring, combined with ERC attendance, helps to ensure court appearances and reduce the likelihood of re-arrest, all the while keeping public safety a priority.

Social service agencies welcome the chance to partner with the justice system and share the programs and practices that make a difference in children's lives. Lancaster County's justice system continues to set precedents, using innovative approaches in an effort to develop productive citizens.



## JUDGE'S CORNER: The Honorable David E. Brian

*Magisterial District Judge Brian presides over District 02-2-05 in Landisville.*

### What did you do before becoming a magisterial district judge (MDJ)?

I was a chemistry major in college, and worked in New Jersey in metal surface finishing as both a plant manager and sales person. After moving to East Petersburg with my wife and two sons, I was elected mayor, and became interested in becoming a district justice in 1990. I ran and won, went to four weeks of intensive district justice school, and started my first term in 1992.

### What changes have you seen concerning underage drinking over the past 18 years?

I would say I've noticed more violations occurring at school, as opposed to outside of school. Kids seem to be getting arrested for drinking at football games, dances, and other school functions, and for coming to school under the influence. They seem to be drinking at younger and younger ages, which concerns me. What has remained the same is that alcohol misuse affects families in our community across the board- I see it at all economic levels.

### What kind of interventions do teens arrested for underage drinking seem to respond to?

I think kids respond to credible stories from people who have lived through addiction, which is why I use (Compass Mark's Student Skills for Life) classes as a referral source. I want them to get through the classes *before* they go to college.

Also, as an MDJ, I have a bully pulpit: a chance to make an impression on the kids who come before me. There are certain people in the area, who came before me as teens with addiction problems, who accepted help and guidance, and came to me when they needed to talk. The people I'm thinking of are doing well today, and it's very gratifying to see them succeed.

### What about lowering the drinking age?

We've been there, done that, and the results were catastrophic. States lowered the minimum age in the 1970's, and it didn't work.

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I recently heard a speaker talk about the adolescent brain; that our decision-making abilities don't develop until we're into our twenties. We also saw about 40 pictures of teenagers under the influence of alcohol in compromising situations, which had quite an impact. The drinking age certainly doesn't need to be any lower.

#### **How should we handle underage drinking?**

Lancaster County isn't different from anywhere else; it has the same problems as other places, including big cities. Adults may or may not be educated about alcohol and drugs. The question is, how do we get this information to kids? Adults need the information first. Kids are using (substances) we never heard of when I was a teenager.

#### **I hear that you're retiring later this year. Any plans?**

Yes, I plan to ride my motorcycle and to travel. Riding is my version of playing golf; my way to relax and enjoy myself. My wife and I have a trip planned later this year to Europe. We're going to see the Passion Play of Oberammergau, Germany, which happens every ten years. Only residents of the town can perform in the play, and we've wanted to see it for a long time. Though we've traveled in the past, this is the first time we've ever needed a passport!



### Student Skills for Life Graduate Quotes

*"In retrospect I really believe getting in trouble was a good thing. I discovered that I was acting stupid and my substance abuse was to mask the emotions and thoughts that haunted me at that time."*

*I learned valuable life skills that come from not only my peers but instructors that have had personal experience with similar problems. I also learned new ways to cope with stress and was told about personal choices I made that were unhealthy. The class would be valuable to any teens and not just when you are sent here by a probation officer or judge under obligated terms."*

*"I have completely eliminated the pot smoking aspect of my life. It was difficult to do, but I am happy that I did. I feel that I have a much clearer mind and can process my thoughts much more fluidly. This is a great change because I no longer make rash and irrational foolish decisions."*

*"My feelings about the class are very good. I felt very comfortable here. Now that I know that drinking and smoking can affect my relationship with my family I will not do drugs or drink. The one thing that is important to me is my family's love so I wouldn't want to ruin that."*

Contact Bill Paré @ (717) 299-2831 for more info on  
Student Skills for Life.