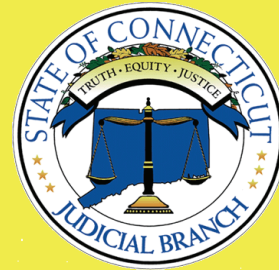


CSSD Chronicle

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch
Court Support Services Division
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“Charity sees the need, not the cause.”

~German Proverb

Editor’s Note: During November and December, many CSSD offices and personnel participated in community outreach activities such as food, clothing, and gift drives. This special edition of the Chronicle highlights and celebrates the many, many ways CSSD personnel helped to make this year’s holiday season a better one for those in need.—Linda Grzeika

It was only two weeks before Thanksgiving when Gerald Davidson and Thomas Willingham, who work at the Hartford Juvenile Detention Center, decided to donate money to Hartford Food Share to help the charitable organization buy turkeys for area families. Other Detention Center staff heard about the duo’s generosity and also wanted to help. According to Davidson and Willingham, over 50 detention staff, and two juvenile probation officers, joined them to contribute \$630 to Food Share. The collected money purchased 48 turkeys for Thanksgiving dinners in the Hartford area. “Next year, we’re going to start collecting earlier!” the men said. “A lot of court and probation staff came up to us afterwards and told us they would have contributed. It looks like this will be a yearly event that will include all of our court, juvenile, and detention staff.”



Gerald Davidson (L) and Thomas Willingham, Hartford Juvenile Detention Center

The New Haven Family Relations Office has a long history of community outreach activities throughout the year. A strong supporter of local domestic violence agencies, employees participate in fund-raising activities such as a yearly bowl-a-thon and “Purple Tie Tuesday” which helps raise funds to provide critical services for individuals and children affected by domestic violence. During the holiday season, staff participate in the New Haven Home Recovery’s Adopt-A-Family Program. This year, the office was matched up with a single parent, six child home. New Haven Home Recovery

identifies each family member and child by age and gender with specific items they request. The list is disseminated to staff who sign up to purchase an item. New Haven Home Recovery delivers the gifts to the family, allowing the parent to wrap and distribute the gifts to the children. This process allows the parent to participate in the giving. The gifts and donors remain anonymous. “I am very proud of my staff,” said Charles “CJ” Forcier, Supervisor I. “This is another example of the commitment they have toward their profession and the community they serve.” Other family relations offices participate in yearly holiday charity events including Harford, which adopts a family identified through the Salvation Army and provides gifts for them.

Juvenile probation staff in Bridgeport are involved in several gift and food drives during December including an interesting grab bag gift campaign where probation officers purchase toys for one another, based on what they think best fits the recipient’s personality, as part of the office’s holiday party. Then, all of the toys are donated to the local Toys for Tots Program. Nicole Messina, who is currently a senior at Sacred Heart University and an intern at the Bridgeport office,



Bridgeport Juvenile Probation staff with donated holiday gifts for local youth



Food drive items collected by Central Office staff for the Wethersfield Food Bank.

also arranged for the office to adopt a family of seven children and a single parent mother, who is deaf. Officers purchased toys for the family, as well as food, to assist the family over the holidays.

Other juvenile probation offices throughout the state participate in local gift and clothing drives. Danbury staff contribute toys to the Joe Romanello Toy Drive, organized by the local AIC. In the Tolland Judicial District, Rockville juvenile probation staff contribute to the Warm Clothing Drive which provides coats, sweaters, hats, mittens, boots, and blankets to local families.

In the Eastern region, Willimantic Juvenile Probation has been involved in the local DCF *Tags for Tots and Teens Program* for the past ten years. The program provides local Windham County children, and youth in DCF care, with gifts for the holiday season. Officers and staff purchase gifts for 25 to 50 DCF-involved children and youth. According to Juvenile Supervisor Geoff Gagnon, "We've always enjoyed doing this activity knowing that the people who were directly benefitting from it were possibly the children, youth, and families that we work with."

Central Office staff collected non-perishable food items at Thanksgiving that were distributed to local families in Wethersfield through the town's food bank. Several boxes were filled to overflowing with canned goods and other items to be enjoyed during the holidays and beyond. Central Office also participated in an annual gift and clothing

drive for two women and children's programs. *Fresh Start* in Hartford and *Elm City Women's and Children's Center* in New Haven identify mothers and their children and provide a list of toy requests and clothing needs. Central Office staff choose one or more items to purchase and wrap the gifts, topping them off with an identifying tag. Over fifty items are donated each year. This holiday season, the request tags, which were written on paper mittens and posted on each floor, were taken by staff within hours and wrapped presents decorated the halls within days. The gifts have already been picked up and will be distributed in the days leading up to Christmas.

For a second year in a row, the officers and staff at the Waterbury Adult Probation office have fulfilled the requests of another women and children's program, *The Chase Center*, in Waterbury. Probation Officers Deanna Recchia and Allison Chance spearhead the effort in their office by posting the program requests, collecting the items, and delivering them to the center for distribution. "The response from our officers is amazing," said Recchia. "Everyone goes above and beyond to make sure the gift and clothing requests are fulfilled. This year, we were able to provide for six children at the center."

CSSD Executive Director William Carbone notes, "This special edition of the *CSSD Chronicle* has highlighted only some of the charitable events that have involved CSSD personnel during this holiday season. We know that other activities are undertaken, and we applaud all those efforts."

May the holidays deliver an abundance of happiness and good cheer to all our *Chronicle* readers, and may that joy continue throughout the New Year.

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The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov



A small portion of the holiday gifts purchased by Central Office staff for the women and children of *Fresh Start* in Hartford, and *Elm City Women's and Children's Center* in New Haven.