



KATHLEEN MERRYMAN
The News Tribune

For kids in need, center's a good thing indeed

By the end of the month, police officers throughout Pierce County will have a choice of where to take the young people they pick up, and children and families spiraling out of control will have a place to find help.

The Pierce County Youth Assessment and Resource Center will offer an alternative to locking up children in Remann Hall for minor offenses, or to sending them back home with nothing more than a stern lecture.

It's the brainchild of Daniel Bissonette, executive director of A Chance to Change, Steve Ellis, executive director of Tacoma Urban League, and a committee of judges, police officers, educators, lawyers, social workers, mental health specialists and community activists. Called the Detention Reform Advisory Committee, the team agreed that too many Pierce County children who could turn around their behavior with help are instead growing hard-core in the juvenile justice system. That has resulted in overcrowding at Remann Hall and on the court dockets. It has pushed children into the criminal justice system, rather than away from it. It is not, they argued, making the community any safer.

The concept surfaced in Pierce County three years ago when City Club of Tacoma issued a report, "Youth at Risk - Improving the Odds." The report noted that, on average, four times as many children are locked up in Pierce County than in Oregon's Multnomah County, which has roughly the same population. It recommended setting up a center where young nonviolent offenders could be taken - usually by police officers - and connected with support services that would yank them away from their bad behavior.

That's what we'll be getting. Officers will run a quick evaluation, called a Detention Risk Assessment Instrument, on the young people they pick up. Any child whose risk factors push the score above 10 points will go straight to Remann Hall. Children who are accused of a violent crime, a felony, possession of a firearm, are on probation or have a warrant out for their arrest will follow the same route, as will out-of-state runaways.

Officers dealing with children suspected of misdemeanors will have the option to take them to what the team is calling the Youth ARC, short for assessment and resource center. Children and families looking for help can also go there on their own. There, the ARC worker will give children a test designed to point out immediate problems, and the kind of help the child and family need.

The ARC worker will connect the child and family with services - anything from food banks to substance abuse treatment to parenting classes - but will remain the child's primary contact with daily check-ins.

"We will know we are doing our job when Remann Hall says, 'Thank you. We are not locking up as many kids as we used to, and they are not getting worse,'" Bissonette said. "Our primary goal is to reduce the use of detention."

Pierce County will start out with two ARCs, one at the Tacoma Urban League and one at Edge Youth Center in Spanaway. By the end of the year, the team hopes to have five sites throughout the county.

This program has \$500,000 in hand, and a projected annual budget of \$1.4 million to support the five centers that will have someone on site or on-call around the clock.

That's risky, but the need is immediate and Bissonette is confident he will be able to rustle up grants and government money to fill the gap.

Bissonette's team has wisely retained evaluators to see whether the program saves money or steers children away from bigger trouble. If it works on either count, the payoff could be substantial. Keeping a child in Remann Hall costs \$160 a day. To cut the population by 40 percent to 50 percent would mean a reduction of about 1,500 bed nights a year.

But that's not the real money. That payoff would come if these kids get counseling and guidance that keep them out of our courts, jails and prisons for the rest of their lives.

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City wants prostitute-free zone

Lakewood council might bar streetwalkers from entering Tillicum

One of the highest-crime areas in Lakewood might see a tougher crackdown on prostitution, Johns and prostitutes would not be allowed to enter Tillicum.

BY ANGIE LEVENTIS
The News Tribune

Lakewood might be stepping up the fight against prostitution in one of its higher crime neighborhoods.

The City Council is looking at expand-

ing its anti-prostitution area to include the entire Tillicum neighborhood. This means anyone convicted of a prostitution offense there could be forbidden from entering the neighborhood again - or any other designated anti-prostitution area in the city.

Council members plan to vote on the change at tonight's council meeting.

The city has already designated prostitution emphasis areas along Pacific Highway Southwest, South Tacoma Way and Union Avenue Southwest, the main drag

in Tillicum.

But this is the first time offenders would be banned from an entire Lakewood neighborhood complete with homes, schools and other trappings of residential life.

The way it works is the city court can issue a Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution order to anyone found guilty of selling or buying sex. Then if police find them in the designated area, they can immediately be arrested - whether they've committed another crime or not.

Sometimes the courts give offenders leniency if they live in the anti-prostitution areas, so they don't always have to move, City Attorney Heidi Wichter said. For instance, the order can stipulate certain hours when the offender is allowed to be in the area, she said.

It's a common strategy to fight prostitution. In November, King County adopted emphasis areas in the communities of White Center and Boulevard Park. Ta-

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SALUTE TO THE SERVICE



PETER HALEY/The News Tribune

Members of the color guard from Third Brigade, 21st Infantry Battalion stand at attention Sunday as other color guard units enter Soldier's Field House at the 2005 Massing of the Colors, an annual event at Fort Lewis. Nearly 100 groups honored the military by showcasing their flags.

Showing their true colors

Almost 100 groups showcase their many flags and honor the armed forces in a ceremony at Fort Lewis. The Massing of the Colors drew hundreds of spectators.

BY DANIEL THIGPEN
The News Tribune

From the back of the gymnasium at Fort Lewis, Maurice Sharp was just another subtle shade in a sea of bright-colored banners and American flags as he stood decked out in a rich burgundy and white uniform.

Up close, he is a 23-year Army veteran and a former prisoner of the Korean War.

As a member of the Tacoma chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, Sharp wanted his involvement in the 2005 Massing of the Colors to send a message to the young people who attended Sunday.

"We like to get our message out that freedom isn't free. It's paid for by a lot of blood, sweat and suffering," he said.

His group was one of almost 100 organizations

representing area veterans, fraternal and other civic groups that gathered to participate in the Massing of the Colors ceremony, held at Soldier's Field House at Fort Lewis on Sunday.

The event honors not only veterans but also current and future members of the armed services. Sharp's sentiments were intended to reach young people like Jacquelyn Jones, a sophomore at Clover Park High School and a member of the Air Force Junior ROTC.

Before the program began, she sat in the bleachers and watched as the groups stationed themselves before the procession.

Jones, 15, said the event was significant to her because it gave her an opportunity to support the people who have come before her.

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STREAMLINING DEVELOPMENT

Bid adieu to competitive bidding?

The Legislature considers a plan to boost Puyallup's downtown redevelopment by letting smaller cities do away with some competitive bids.

BY EIJIRO KAWADA
The News Tribune

Hoping to attract private investors to flesh out a City Hall complex downtown, Puyallup is asking state lawmakers for the authority to streamline the competitive public bidding process.

Puyallup officials are hoping private investors will add condominiums, restaurants or office space to the \$12 million City Hall project,

which in turn would spur downtown renewal. But some developers might get involved only if they know they can win a package deal and control their investment from start to finish.

Redevelopment "will be more attractive to developers with the ability to (skip standard bidding) than without it," Puyallup City Manager Jim Bacon said. "Other communities have had successful examples."

The Legislature is considering proposals that would allow Puyallup - and other similar-size cities - to avoid having to take bids at both the design and construction stages.

A bill made it out of a Senate committee before a key deadline last week, though its fate is uncertain as

unions and contractors have thrown their weight against it.

The bill highlights a growing trend of local governments wanting to do bold civic projects without having to open up to public bidding in the middle. But the building industry fears the competitive process might be compromised, costing taxpayers more money.

This is the second time in three years that Puyallup has asked the Legislature for help revitalizing its historic downtown.

In 2002, lawmakers amended a law so that cities with at least 30,000 people can offer downtown devel-

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COMMENCEMENT CRUNCH

UWT to pass out diplomas outdoors

Responding to student complaints, the University of Washington Tacoma decides on an open-air commencement ceremony to make room for more spectators.

BY DAVID WICKERT
The News Tribune

A student outcry over ticket rationing is forcing the University of Washington Tacoma to find a new venue for its June commencement.

Because of a scheduling conflict with the Tacoma Dome, UWT planned to move this year's commencement to the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade

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QUARRY QUANDARY

The first choice for a graving yard was a graveyard. Why are residents now upset about Pick No. 2? B2

COMING UP IN SOUTH SOUND

A task force will meet to discuss the possibility of converting all of Pierce County's elections into mail-in-only elections.

ZONE

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come has similar areas. Lakewood Police Chief Larry Saunders said the approach has been helpful in fighting prostitution-related crimes along these strips. But it's not a panacea. As offenders figure out the targets — and they're kicked out of them — they find new corners to walk.

For instance, while police reported fewer prostitution arrests and incidents on Union Avenue last year, there have been more on Portland Avenue, Thorne Lane and Washington Avenue.

In the past two years, police report 39 arrests or incidents related to prostitution in Tillicum, almost half of them occurring last year. The city can designate prostitution areas only in parts of the city where police have documented a high number of incidents and arrests, Wachtler said.

The idea behind targeting the sex trade is that it helps clean up other social ills.

Law enforcement officials say prostitution breeds drug trafficking and addiction, violent crime and public nuisances.

Anyone soliciting a prostitute could also be banned from the designated area, though officials

say it's usually more difficult to get the jobs because they often come from outside Lakewood. The prostitutes, however, tend to stick to one area. They also travel in groups, moving on to new cities once they get tagged by local police, Saunders said.

Lakewood and Tacoma are working on another approach to the problem called "John School," where those caught soliciting streetwalkers would pay a diversion fee. The money would pay for counseling, drug treatment, work and health programs for prostitutes — and more police stings.

"We have compassion for prostitutes," Saunders said. "But this can run businesses areas into decline."

He said he would like to get the program running by June.

In the meantime, Tillicum residents are glad the city is expanding its anti-prostitution area.

David Anderson, president of the Tillicum Neighborhood Association and the area's merchants group, said he supports the ordinance.

"This is a step in the right direction," he said.

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UWT

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Center. But the new convention center seats fewer people than the Dome, so UWT had announced plans to guarantee students only four tickets apiece.

That angered many students who said four tickets weren't enough to accommodate friends and family.

"I'm the first one in my family ever to graduate (from college)," senior Cory Robinson said at a campus forum Thursday.

Robinson has four brothers, two sisters, a dad and two moms who want to attend her graduation. "They're the ones who have gotten me to this point," she said.

A student government survey found widespread concern about the scarcity of commencement tickets. UWT officials got the message.

On Friday they announced plans to relocate the June 10 commencement to an outdoor venue that can accommodate more people. Interim Chancellor Steven Olswang said UWT has three outdoor options, but he couldn't disclose them for the moment. Cheney Stadium was one option discussed at Thursday's forum.

Olswang said the change of

venue could cost UWT an additional \$10,000, including the loss of a \$2,900 deposit paid to the convention center. But he said the extra cost is worth it to address students' demands for more tickets.

"They were right. We were wrong," Olswang said.

The problem began last summer when UWT learned the Tacoma Dome would not be available to host the 2005 commencement. The Dome is hosting an Olympic-style gymnastics competition in June.

That forced five colleges to reschedule their commencements at the convention center, which holds about 3,500 people. Because of their smaller crowds, three of them — Clover Park Technical College, Pierce College and Tacoma Community College — are not limiting the number of commencement tickets available to students.

Highline Community College already limited student tickets.

But commencement tickets became a hot topic at UWT when campus officials discovered the convention center couldn't hold the 4,500 people who attended last year's graduation.

Olswang said UWT didn't know that when it booked the convention center last summer

because the center had not yet opened and its capacity was not yet known.

When they learned of the problem, Olswang said campus officials decided to stick with the convention center and guarantee students four tickets each. Depending on how many tickets students requested, some could be left over to accommodate larger ticket requests.

In addition, the campus planned to hold separate ceremonies for graduate students in several programs. Though they would still be welcome at the main commencement, the thought was that many grad students wouldn't attend, freeing up tickets for undergraduates.

Rationing tickets to commencement is a fact of life at many campuses. Pacific Lutheran University, for example, gives students up to five tickets, and Highline will limit

its students to six each.

But ticket rationing is a new idea at UWT, where many of the students are older and have spouses and children. The thought of picking which relatives could attend commencement left many students angry.

"My daughter or my mother will have to wait in the parking lot, which doesn't make me happy," senior April Adams said at Thursday's forum.

Friday's announcement was an "arming" victory for students, according to Peter Kellett, student government director of events and programs.

"Our voice finally was heard," Kellett said. "Granted, we had to scream and kick a lot. But it worked!"

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