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For Immediate Release
07/13/10
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Generous Jurors Help Disadvantaged Children

Delaware County Juror Donation Program Aids Many Youth Programs

Delaware County jurors not only perform a civic duty, but many help disadvantaged children by donating their stipend to one of several charities that help children in-need. This year, the donations even reached children impacted by the earthquake in Haiti.

Through the Delaware County Juror Donation Program, jurors volunteer all or part of the \$9-a-day stipend to one of five charities. Since the program started in March 2003, the Juror Donation Program has donated \$450,000 to assist disadvantaged children in Delaware County.

Earlier this year, the program extended its reach to send aid to Haitian children impacted by the devastating earthquake that hit the island in January. The Haitian effort was a one-time campaign in response to a devastating event and resulted in a \$6,130 donation to UNICEF to help Haitian children who were injured or orphaned as a result of the quake.

Delaware County jurors can regularly opt to donate their stipend to: the Hero Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to the children of fallen police and firefighters; Delaware County Children and Youth Services (CYS); the Domestic Abuse Project for children affected by domestic violence; Operation Warm, which provides winter coats to disadvantaged children; and CASA Youth Advocates, which provides court appointed special advocates for children in the court system.

For three months in 2010, the Donation Program teamed up with UNICEF to assist disadvantaged children in Haiti, said Gerald C. Montella, Esq., Delaware County District Court Administrator and founder of the Jury Donation Program. During that period, 472 jurors donated their stipend and travel expenses. The proceeds were forwarded to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF to assist Haitian children with health care, clean water, nutrition and emergency relief.

“We created this program solely for the benefit of disadvantaged children,” Montella said. “We were pleased to team up with UNICEF because we were assured that all donations would go directly to disadvantaged Haitian children. Our generous jurors enabled us to raise \$6,130 over a 90-day period.”

(more)

(Juror Donation Program continued)

In Delaware County, jurors have donated a total of \$100,000 to the Hero Scholarship Fund of Delaware County since the inception of the program.

Children and Youth Services has received a substantial \$210,103, which helps provide summer camp programs, educational programs and daily necessities to children in-need. CYC uses some of the donations to supply duffle bags and toiletries to children who are entering the foster care system.

The Domestic Abuse Project has received donations totaling \$97,100 to provide shelter, counseling and educational programs to Delaware County children.

Operation Warm has raised \$28,363 to purchase winter coats and clothing for at-risk children.

CASA Youth Advocates, a non-profit program that trains volunteers to advocate on behalf of children in the court system, has received \$6,706 from the Jury Donation Program.

Donors receive a certificate of gratitude.

Montella acknowledged the efforts of Jerry O'Connor and Otto Zittarrelti of the County's IT Department for making the computer revisions needed to keep track of the donations. Montella also acknowledged Karen Cuba, Jury Administrator, and her staff for accepting the added responsibility to manage the program. The program was started with the hope of raising \$1,000 the first year.

"A thousand dollars was donated the first month and at that point, I knew we had something special," Montella said

Montella, who resides in Concord Township, said the program is strictly voluntary. Donors also have the option of donating only a portion of their stipend.

"We simply advise the jurors about the program when they come in. There's no pressure placed on the juror to donate their stipend. It's a great opportunity for a juror to both perform their civic duty and help a child who needs assistance," said Montella.

So far, 34,110 jurors have generously donated their stipend to benefit disadvantaged children.

"I am very proud of the program and hope that it continues to help kids who need support. I'd like to thank the thousands of jurors for their generosity," said Montella. "Our jurors can be confident that their donations will be money well spent."

President Judge Joseph P. Cronin, Jr. is also a proponent of the program.

"The Delaware County Board of Judges deeply appreciates not only the devoted service our jurors give each day, but we are keenly aware of the community spirit shown by many of the jurors who have donated their juror fee to the worthy charities who benefit from their generosity," said Judge Cronin.

- For information on the Juror Donation Program or jury duty, contact the Court Administrator's Office at (610) 891-4557. Since July 6, the Jury Assembly Room is located in a new location in Room 118 on the first floor of the Government Center. Information on jury duty is also available on the county Website at www.co.delaware.pa.us.



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Juror Donation Program aids children



Caption 1: Delaware County jurors are a generous group as evidenced by the stipend money they donate to disadvantaged children through the Juror Donation Program. Pictured, from left, Jury Administrator Karen Cuba and Delaware County District Court Administrator Gerald C. Montella, Esq., join Mary Germond, Children and Youth Services (CYS) administrator, in displaying one of the duffel bags, packed with toiletries, partly funded through the Juror Donation Program and given to children entering the foster care system.



Caption 2: Delaware County residents now serving on jury duty start their day in the new Jury Assembly Room located in Room 118 on the first floor of the Delaware County Government Center. On a daily basis, jurors assemble here and are given instructions on procedures. Shown on the large TV screen is President Judge Joseph P. Cronin Jr. providing an introduction for the juror information questionnaire that all jurors are required to complete.