

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Historically, community service has played an important role in corrections as a sanction to hold offenders accountable for their actions, and to “pay back” the community in some way for the harm that is caused by crime. In the past decade, the concept of “restorative community service” has taken hold in many corrections agencies and communities. Restorative community service is best described as that which is visible, viable, and allows victim input into the types of service that is performed. Increasingly, it is also being utilized to directly benefit organizations that provide services and support to victims of crime.

Many institutional and community corrections agencies have implemented restorative community service; some have become “annual events” that provide services and/or raise funds for victim assistance programs. Examples include the following:

- The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections sponsors an annual “Angola Break-in” fund raiser that benefits the Baton Rouge Area Crisis Intervention Center, the Crime Victims Reparation Fund, and the Inmate Education Fund. Held at the 18,000 acre Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP), the first year’s event consisted of a 5-K relay, an individual run, and a one-mile fun run. The second year featured a modified poker run with motorcycles from the Department headquarters in Baton Rouge to LSP.
- An LSP organization called the “Toy Shop” made and donated rocking chairs to a local library, and the library and children’s ward at the local hospital.
- The LSP’s Juvenile Awareness Program combines a staff-guided tour of the prison, issues-related skits written and performed by inmates, and on-on-one conversations between inmates and at-youth risk who participate in the program. The Jefferson Parish Juvenile Diversion Program has made the Angola trip a mandatory part of release from that program.
- In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, youthful offenders in a detention setting made hundreds of “dreamcatchers” to commemorate the 1999 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week theme, “Dare to Dream.” They were handed out to participants at a Candlelight Vigil honoring family members of homicide survivors that week.
- In Lincoln, Nebraska, a supervised work crew of youthful offenders helped a domestic violence victim and her children move out of a dangerous home situation to a safe house.
- In Sandusky, Ohio, the community service program allows offenders to work off fines at a rate of \$7.00 per hour. With prior approval from the victim, some offenders have made donations to the charity of the victim’s choice in the name of the victim.
- In Maine, offenders in the state Department of Corrections typeset, edited and published the statewide victim assistance information/referral directory.
- A licensed pharmacist under the supervision of the Stark Regional Community Correction Center in Ohio was convicted of forging drug documents. He performed 500

hours of community service at the free clinic in the neighborhood in which he had sold drugs.

- At CYA's Dewitt Nelson Youth Correctional Facility, an annual silent auction of art and shop projects created by the wards is held to benefit victims.
- CYA wards also make holiday wreaths that are sold, with the proceeds going to local victim service organizations near the institutions. In addition, the handmade wreaths are also donated to local victim service organizations, with a letter from a ward stating who they are, the offense they committed, and how they want to begin restoring justice by donating the wreath.
- CYA wards at the Preston Youth Correctional Facility knit, crochet and sew garments and blankets for premature infants born at four local hospitals. They also sew satin burial gowns trimmed in lace for preemies who don't survive.
- The annual "Corrections on Canvas" art shows – sponsored by the New York Department of Correctional Services – have raised over \$34,000 that is donated to the Crime Victims Board. In 2000, plants grown by inmates in horticulture programs at three institutions were sold, with all proceeds going to the Crime Victims Board.
- In the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Division of Adult Institutions, inmates have made teddy bears for local domestic violence shelters and law enforcement agencies; crocheted scarves and lap Afghans for the Salvation Army and interfaith care givers; knitted hats, mittens, baby blankets and gloves for abuse children; created the layout and design for a brochure for a regional domestic violence shelter; constructed Braille books for visually impaired children; and made monetary donations to a funeral fund for homicide victims.
- In California, annual inmate fundraisers held in conjunction with National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) each April benefit local victim service organizations in communities where the institutions are located. Over \$300,000 raised last year – through food sales, walk-a-thons, sporting events, crafts fairs, recycling and other activities – benefitted both community- and system-based victim assistance programs.
- Youthful offenders from the Idaho Youth Ranch escorted Alzheimer's patients from a local retirement center and their families for a day at the Western Idaho State Fair.
- In Maryland, inmates from the Maryland Correctional Institution in Hagerstown participated in an annual Thanksgiving dinner that feeds the region's most needy citizens, cooking and processing approximately 1,000 turkeys that fed 20,000 people.