



# Bethlehem Youth Court

The power of positive peer pressure

## 2023 Annual Report

Utilizing a youth based restorative justice program in our community



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## Board of Directors:

### Co-Chairpersons:

Terri Egan, *President, Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce*  
Thomas Spina, Jr., *Assistant U.S. Attorney*

### Secretary:

Nancy Maurer, *Director, Field Placement Programs, Albany Law School*

### Treasurer:

Pam Robbins, *Executive Director, Policy Research Inc.*

### Ex-Officio Member:

Hon. David VanLuven, *Bethlehem Town Supervisor*

### Members:

Adam Cobb, *Detective, Bethlehem Police Department*

Dan Coffey, *Bethlehem Town Board Member*

Hakim Jones, *Principal, Pieter B. Coeymans Elementary*

Adam Katz, *Assistant U.S. Attorney*

Jennifer Miller, *Albany County Probation Retiree*

Gene Primomo, *Assistant Federal Defender*

Michelle Sleurs, *Probation Supervisor, Albany County Probation*

James Smith, *Hall Principal, Bethlehem Central High School*

### Student Representatives

Dylan Wang and Naomi Doyle – BCHS Class of 2022-2023

Rurika Suzuki – BCHS Class of 2023-2024

### Director

Katrina Charland

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# End of Year Report

## Introduction

Bethlehem Youth Court (BYC) is a non-profit organization that has been serving the Bethlehem community for over 25 years as a restorative-justice based diversion program for young offenders and volunteers. Bethlehem Youth Court’s mission is to serve justice involved youth by providing them a second chance at a clean record through participation in peer-led sentencing hearings and to promote positive civic engagement for young volunteers. This unique diversion approach within the justice system focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large through the completion of community service and other positive sanctions.

## Year in Review

BYC was busy in 2023! In total, 20 cases were handled through BYC, all with successful completions.

Program participants, as well as regular volunteers, were very active in the community volunteering at town sponsored events such as the Eggstravaganza, Walk and Roll Fest, and Halloween Hay Day. Bethlehem Police Department hosts two main events each year, National Night Out and the Holiday Lights in the Park, both of which BYC assisted with and participated in as a community organization. In addition to town and police department programs, BYC was active with other community events such as the Delmar Dash, Bethlehem Middle School garden work and all of Albany County’s child safety seat inspections.



One of the biggest undertakings this year was helping a property owner clean up years’ worth of litter that had accumulated at a popular party site in a wooded area. BYC took initiative in the removal of over 20 large garbage bags of debris, mostly alcohol bottles. BYC would like to thank the Bethlehem Town Highway Department for the assistance in removal of those bags once they were brought curbside. The property owner is grateful for the collaborated efforts to clean up the land.

A Siena student, Lexi Parker, interned with BYC for the fall semester. She assisted with case management, community service, and helping oversee youth court hearings. While in high school, Lexi was part of a school-based youth court in Warren County. She was a wonderful help and was able to not

only fulfill the necessary hours she needed for her internship class, but also garner real life experiences working with youth.

## Offender Statistics

As previously stated, BYC was able to successfully complete 20 cases in 2023 handling a total of 34 charges (many cases had multiple charges attached). The most common offense was trespass, with a total of 7 charges. Over the past two years there have been several incidents related to what appear to be abandoned buildings, but are actually privately owned. In one such case, a group of 5 youths trespassed by going into a house that they thought was abandoned, but it turned out that the homeowner visited the property infrequently and had a primary residence elsewhere. Damages to the property were reported to the police and after an investigation, youth court became a desirable course of action for those involved. The second most common offense was conspiracy 6<sup>th</sup>, which may sound very alarming at first, but what it really means is that two or more people agree together to do something that constitutes breaking the law and then carry out such action. Take that and apply it to typical teenage mentality and it makes perfect sense. Young people get an idea, share it with one another, and then carry it out...conspiracy 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Community Service

- Handmade holiday cards for residents at the Peregrine
- BCMS Garden
- Stuffing plastic eggs for the Eggstravaganza and assisting with event itself
- All Albany County child safety seat inspections (4) total
- Delmar Dash
- Walk and Roll fest
- National Night Out
- Halloween Hay Day
- Holiday Lights in the Park event





## Volunteer Members

In the spring of 2023 BYC hosted its annual training program for new members. A total of 16 new inductees were sworn in by Hon. Ryan Donovan during a graduation ceremony in May.



Each year BYC sponsors (3) scholarships: The Judge Jordan Memorial Award, a competition style scholarship during which volunteer members present a case to a panel of judges; the Judge Wenger Memorial Award, an essay contest; and the Andrew Napierski Memorial Award, which is a service-based scholarship. In total, \$2,000 in scholarships are offered to BYC members. The Judge Jordan Memorial Scholarship was made possible by donations from the Bethlehem Police Benevolent Association, the

Police Supervisors' Association, and community members. The 2023 winners of these scholarships were Ella Holbrook, first place, and Dylan Wang, second place. The Judge Wenger Memorial Award was given to Jared Scharf, and the service-based award, provided my memorial donations, went to Naomi Doyle.



## Association of New York State Youth Courts (ANYSYC)

BYC Director, Katrina Charland, has been actively involved in the statewide association serving as current co-president and having served as secretary and co-president in the past. The association hosts quarterly meetings to collaborate and network with similar programs across the state. They held a conference in Elmira, NY in 2022 and in 2023 Katrina attended a New York State Youth Bureaus conference in Syracuse, NY. Given the unique position a youth court director holds, networking and collaboration are crucial components to staying current and up to date on comparative programs.

## Financial Outlook

The Stewarts Holiday Match grant, made possibly by community member donations matched by Stewarts Shops, has been a consistent source of grant funding from year to year. In 2023 BYC was awarded \$1,250 to help cover training and operational expenses. Another more recent funding stream has been through an Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) grant; BYC received \$2,500 from this source in 2023. Funding from the Town of Bethlehem remains the most consistent and vital source of revenue for the program. Continued support by the Town of Bethlehem is incredibly appreciated. Private donations can be made at any time via PayPal on our website, or by check.



## 5-Year Comprehensive Statistics

Data prior to 2019 is available upon request.

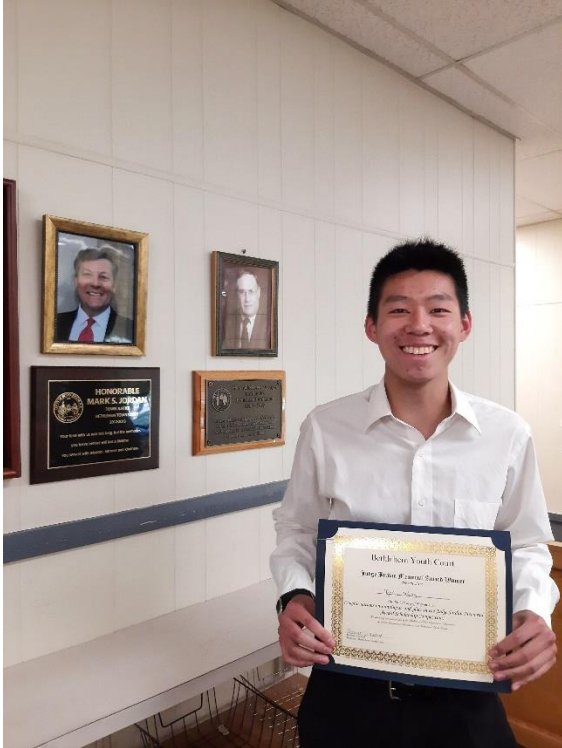
<b>Comprehensive Statistics 2019-2023</b>								
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Breakdown</b>		
Total # of cases	25	16	3	19	20	Total:		83
% of successful cases	96%	94%	100%	100%	100%	Average:		98%
Total # of community service hours sentenced	450	219	57	267	472	Total:		1465
Total # of community service hours performed by program	1275	430	296	609	872	Total:		3482
Average # of hours sentenced per offender	18	14	19	15	23.6	Average:		17.92
Average age of offender	15	16	15	14	16	Average:		15.2
% Males	72%	60%	67%	79%	75%	Average:		71%
% Females	28%	40%	33%	21%	25%	Average:		29%
\$ Restitution Paid	\$3,333	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	Total:		\$3,333
Apology letters written	12	2	2	11	8	Total:		35
Educational classes sentenced	14	3	1	2	1	Total:		21
# of offenders who signed up as volunteers	0	0	1	0	1	Total:		2
Most Common Charge	Criminal Mischief (19%)	Trespass (35%)	Split 3 ways: trespass, making graffiti and unlawful dealing with a minor	Criminal Trespass 3rd	Trespass			
Second most common charge	Burglary 17%	Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance 7th (23.5%)		Arson 5th, Harassment, and Reckless Endangerment- property	Conspiracy 6th			



Photo Gallery



Photos of debris and litter that was cleaned up from a popular party site in a privately-owned wooded area in Slingerlands.



Left: Dylan Wang, Judge Jordan Scholarship second place recipient

Below: Ella Hollbrook, Judge Jordan Scholarship first place recipient



Jared Scharf, Judge Wenger Memorial Award winner



Director, Katrina Charland (left) with Naomi Doyle (right), Andrew Napierski Memorial Award recipient