

Lycoming County Courts have a track record for innovation, especially when it comes to prison diversion and alternatives to incarceration. In 1976, the Lycoming County Courts, with the support of the Lycoming County Board of Commissioners, adopted a Community Service Program. The Community Service Program requires offenders to perform community services or work for governmental or non-profit agencies in lieu of other judicial remedies and penalties. Currently there are sixty-eight (68) community service work sites the Adult Probation Office utilizes. The County Courts order community service as a means of punishment and offenders frequently take the opportunity to work off costs and fines if they are indigent. In addition, offenders gain work experience while doing community service. In some instances the offender is ultimately hired by the agency for which they work. The Community Service Program benefits the community by saving the costs associated with incarceration. The Program also provides a way to encourage honorable conduct on the part of the offender.

In January of 1996, a devastating and disastrous flood occurred in Lycoming County which caused loss of life and tremendous property damage. The Lycoming County Courts and the Lycoming County Board of Commissioners immediately requested the Community Service Program to assist Lycoming County citizens in the flood disaster relief effort. When the flood disaster relief effort ended in 1998, the Community Service Program began focusing on assisting municipal, city, county and non-profit agencies with a variety of projects. In the summer of 2004 the Adult Probation Office requested that each offender sentenced by the Court receive community service work. The Adult Probation then developed a set of guidelines for imposing community service hours on offenders. The community service projects have been so successful that the request for manpower now far exceeds the Adult Probation Office's resources.

Communities throughout the state and nation have developed and enhanced their programs by utilizing Lycoming County's ideas in foresight in community service programming. In 2000, Lycoming County worked with Lebanon County to develop and implement Community Service Program in Lebanon County. In 2006, Lycoming County Commissioners signed a contract with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation & Parole to allow state offenders to perform community service work under our program. This contract agreement is the first of its kind in the state of Pennsylvania and several counties have duplicated Lycoming County's efforts.

The Community Service Program is extremely effective at minimizing the inmate population while maintaining public safety. The statistical data for the program is reflective of the impact this program makes. In 2007, a total of 1,721 participants completed 153,230 hours of community service. In 2008, 1,512 participants completed 114,537 hours of community service. In 2009, a total of 1,710 participants completed 120,228 hours of community service. At an hourly rate of \$7.15 per hour, governmental and non-profit agencies have saved \$2,008,525 through the use of Lycoming County's Community Service Program over the last two (2) years. In addition, it has saved Lycoming County's tax payers money as the Courts have diverted many offenders from prison by utilizing the Community Service Program as an alternative to incarceration.