

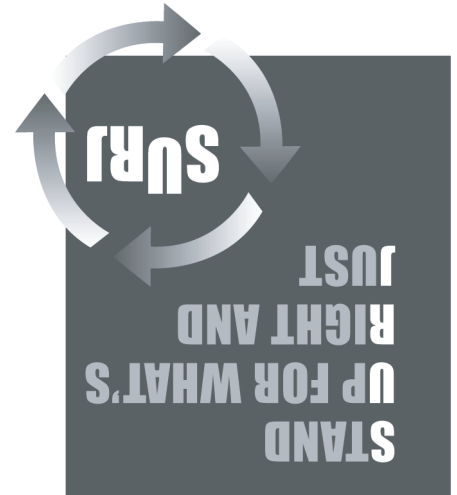
Kudos for Delaware Interns

The SURJ office thanks its undergraduate interns for volunteering their hard work over the last four months. They put their combined knowledge of issues related to criminal justice and political science to use conducting research and gathering information in support of SURJ's agenda for action. They also helped to organize events, maintain our website, and coordinate our annual appeal.



Chair Dale Wolf speaks with interns (from R to L) Kate Crossan, Victoria Meclarey, Gillian Andrews, Josh Locke, Stephanie Watson, and Jen Macdonald and Office/Outreach Coordinator Dana Sorenson at SURJ's 2004 Annual Board of Trustees meeting.

Action Track
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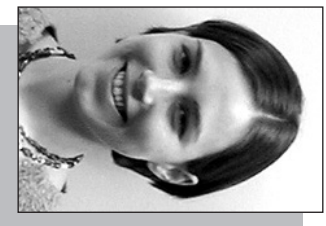
Read On About

- New Office/Outreach Coordinator
- Board of Directors Meeting
- News About Mandatory Minimums & Women in Prison

SURJ Highlights

SURJ Has New Office/ Outreach Coordinator

Dana Sorenson brings a unique blend of education and experience to her position as SURJ's new Office/Outreach Coordinator. With two years in the AmeriCops program, she brings to SURJ familiarity with volunteer recruitment and community outreach, as well as experience working with non-profits through direct service. She received a dual Anthropology/Sociology Bachelor's Degree from Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. For a portion of that time, she worked with inmates in a minimum-security prison, helping them prepare for their G.E.D. In her home state of Delaware, Dana has worked as a Legislative Page in the House of Representatives and as an intern at CHILD, Inc. in Wilmington.



Among Dana's duties will be managing SURJ's office, building coalitions in support of our initiatives, and informing our members of important developments.

Annual Board of Trustees Meeting a Success

Twenty SURJ Trustees gathered on Friday, December 3, 2004 at the Community Service Building in Wilmington for the Annual Board of Trustees meeting. Chair Dale Wolf greeted attendees and oversaw the event.

Policy Committee Chair Marlene Lichtenstader and Executive Director Josh Templett shared with the Board the successes of last year and reviewed SURJ's 2005 agenda. **At the top of the list is SURJ's 2005 priority: repairing Delaware's mandatory minimum drug laws and returning sentencing discretion to our outstanding judiciary.** SURJ will also continue its support of other sentencing reforms, as well as its promotion of the successful reentry of ex-offenders into the community and the availability of high-quality substance abuse and mental health treatment, both in our prisons and in our community. **To view the full 2005 agenda, please visit SURJ's website at www.surj.org**

Guest Speaker Liane Sorenson, State Senator and SURJ Trustee, spoke about her work with the Council of State Governments as Vice Chair of its Criminal Justice Board. She stated her belief that the work SURJ and similar organizations around the country are doing to reform the criminal justice system is extremely critical. She then cited work being done on a national level through the Council of State Governments to assist policymakers, elected officials, criminal justice and mental health professionals, and others

in improving mental health in the criminal justice system and successful offender re-entry into the community.

Canon Lloyd Casson, Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors, offered a warm closing. He spoke of the vital work that SURJ is doing, and the ways in which the Board of Trustees can assist SURJ's efforts: by recruiting new members, scheduling a Speakers' Bureau presentation, and contacting state legislators.

SURJ would like to thank its Board of Trustees for their continued support. Our Trustees' networking in the community, service on SURJ committees, and financial support make possible SURJ's efforts to improve Delaware's criminal justice system.

SURJ Welcomes New Board Members

At the annual meeting, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to elect three new members to its Board of Directors.

Chris Buccini, a partner in the Buccini/Pollin Group (BPG), oversees acquisitions and redevelopment projects. Previously, he was the Director of Acquisitions, and Senior Vice President of Barrow Street Capital, LLC, in New York. He is also a former vice president of Eastlil Realty.

Louis Freelh, Vice Chairman and General Counsel at MBNA America Bank, N.A., previously served as a Special Agent in the FBI before becoming FBI Director from 1993 to 2001. He also served as an Assistant United States Attorney and United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York.

Matthew J. Lynch, Jr., Esq., Senior Vice President of Wilmington Trust's Wealth Advisory Services, also chairs the Delaware Children's Advocacy Center, an organization that assists child abuse victims. He is also a former Delaware Deputy Attorney General.

2004 Annual Appeal

SURJ would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to all our members who contributed this year, as part of our annual appeal. Since this fall, we have raised \$25,800 from our Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, and membership. It is through our members' generous support that SURJ is able to operate from year to year.

If you have not yet contributed, please consider doing so. Your support will help ensure that SURJ is able to help frame and preserve an improved criminal justice system for Delawareans now and in the future.

We'd also like to extend our thanks to those of you who have signed up new members, spoken with your legislator, served on our committees, and otherwise given your time to improve the quality of justice in our state.

In The News

Mandatory Minimums – What's Happening

In October 2004, Pennsylvania responded to a growing inmate population and surging prison costs by easing several mandatory minimum sentences to allow nonviolent drug offenders to serve shorter prison sentences and receive better substance abuse treatment. The change is expected to save the state more than \$20 million a year and to decrease the prison population, which currently stands at about 41,000 inmates.

More recently, New York, home of the infamously harsh Rockefeller drug laws of the 1970s, passed a bill during December 2004 that will reduce mandatory sentences for several non-violent drug offenses and will offer early release into supervised community-based treatment to non-violent offenders who have participated in drug treatment programs, G.E.D. programs, or community work crews.

Overall, more than half the states have loosened sentencing policies in the past three years, according to Daniel F. Wilhelm, director of the State Sentencing and Corrections Project at the Vera Institute of Justice in New York.

Meanwhile, the injustice risked by mandatory minimum drug sentences remains clear. The *New York Times* reported on November 17, 2004 that a 25-year-old man was sentenced to 55 years in prison for possessing a firearm while selling a small amount of marijuana, although he never used, threatened to use, or brandished the weapon. The judge in the case expressed dismay with having to sentence the man to such lengthy imprisonment when a rapist, murderer, or hijacker could all receive lesser punishments than that of this small-time drug dealer.

Rate of Female Incarceration on the Rise

More and more women are going to prison every year. According to the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics report, there were 101,179 women in prisons in 2003, up 3.6 percent from 2002. It is the first time that the female prison population has topped 100,000. The report also showed that the incarceration rate for women is increasing at nearly twice that of men.

An article in *Join Together Online* attributes the increased U.S. prison population to longer sentences, especially for drug crimes, and fewer inmates being granted parole or probation.

In a recent opinion piece in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, William DiMascio, executive director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, credits this disturbing trend to sentencing guidelines and mandatory minimum sentences. "The impact of these trends cannot be ignored," writes DiMascio. "When men go to prison, families are disrupted and children lose role models. When women go to prison, families are destroyed and children's lives are devastated."

Visit SURJ's website at www.surj.org for links to the full text of both of these articles.