



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

Mayor Office

SHAWYN PATTERSON-HOWARD, MPA
Mayor

City Hall, One Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY, 10550
Phone: (914) 840-4013 Fax: (914) 665-6173

TIMOTHY ALLEN
Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2022

Contact: Joanne Dunn

Executive Director, Youth Shelter of Westchester Programs
MV EAJP Coordinator. Jdunn@ysow.org (914) 382-6607

Mount Vernon City Courts Marks the One-Year Anniversary of the Emerging Adult Justice Part (“EAJP”) of the Court

Mount Vernon, New York – On Friday June 17, 2022, today marks the one-year anniversary of the official launching of the Mount Vernon *Emerging Adult Justice Part* of the City Court. The EAJP was launched June 17, 2021, in coordination with the 2021 Juneteenth Celebration.

The mission of Mount Vernon EAJP is to provide meaningful opportunities for resolving criminal cases by pursuing alternatives to conventional prosecution, sentencing and incarceration for young people between the ages of 18-25. The emphasis is to change the traditional approach – from being focused solely on crime and punishment – to employing strategies that connect emerging adult offenders with services, resources, and opportunities as a condition for favorable resolution of their cases.

Many of these emerging adult offenders have significant social service and economic needs. Some of them are not in school, are unemployed, lack stable housing or are homeless, and some have mental health challenges. This new initiative recognizes that Neuroscience research shows that brain development for young people continues well into their mid-twenties so that cognitive growth associated with independent-mature adulthood does not fully occur between ages 18-25 years old. While society’s response is not to make excuses for criminal behavior, its responsibility is to find solutions to prevent young people from reoffending.

The initiative is a court-driven collaborative effort between the Westchester County District Attorney’s Office, the Defense Bar, the Court, and the Youth Shelter of Westchester Programs (YSOW). The YSOW coordinates mental health services, high school equivalency programs, job training and skills programs, mentorship and many other opportunities through a network of public and private service providers, thereby placing emerging adults on a path of success and self-autonomy as productive members of society. There are many success stories over the last year including participants successfully passing their GED examinations, pursuing career in law enforcement, enrolling at Westchester Community College; enlisting in the United States Army; and services

“The Jewel of Westchester”



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

Mayor Office

SHAWYN PATTERSON-HOWARD, MPA
Mayor

City Hall, One Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY, 10550
Phone: (914) 840-4013 Fax: (914) 665-6173

TIMOTHY ALLEN
Director of Communications

coordination for participant
between MV EAJP and Brooklyn Youth Court.

The Administrative Judge for the Ninth Judicial District, Anne Minihan, said “working in collaboration with our partners, we in the Courts are grateful to have the opportunity to utilize the criminal justice system in a way that brings together emerging adult offenders with the resources necessary to address their unmet social, educational, vocational, mental health, and residential needs in hopes of creating a space for positive and long-lasting life changes. We view this endeavor as part of an investment not only in the involved individuals but in their families and in our greater community.”

Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard, who hosted the EAJP launching last year at City Hall Plaza, said that “here in Mount Vernon, we are grateful for a successful first year of the Mount Vernon Emerging Adult Justice Court. We have always blazed trails in creating innovative support systems for our residents who are at a crossroad in their lives. I am happy to see that young adults who have taken advantage of this tremendous opportunity are changing their trajectory. It’s proof that these restorative models of justice work, and I’m happy that we’ve been able to provide housing and employment to some of the participants. It wouldn’t be possible without the support of all the community partners. Special thanks to the Youth Shelter of Westchester, Mount Vernon City Court, Westchester DA’s office, and the Legal Aid Society, who made it a success.”

“This collaborative process over the last year has been tremendously successful for young people, some of whom obtained housing, job skills training and placement, mental health services, mentorship and many other services through the YSOW. These opportunities are changing their lives and placing them on a path to succeed while resolving their cases favorably,” said Mount Vernon City Court Judge, Lyndon Williams.

“I am proud that my office has been a partner in this innovative and groundbreaking initiative. The Mount Vernon EAJP brings valuable services, resources and opportunities to help youth adults heal and avoid recidivism, while strengthening public trust in the criminal justice system. Thanks to the hard work of all of involved in this partnership, we have seen inspiring success stories from many program participants in this first year. I am grateful to all who are invested in ensuring the continued success of the EAJP, especially the dedicated ADAs in our Mount Vernon Branch Office for running the day-to-day aspects of the program,” said Miriam E. Rocah, Westchester County District Attorney.

“The efforts of the stakeholders in establishing this innovative court cannot be overstated. This court provides hope and restorative programs for young people arrested and charged with crimes. When other institutions have failed our clients, this program provides support and education for them. It gives them the

“The Jewel of Westchester”



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

Mayor Office

SHAWYN PATTERSON-HOWARD, MPA

Mayor

City Hall, One Roosevelt Square

Mount Vernon, NY, 10550

Phone: (914) 840-4013 Fax: (914) 665-6173

TIMOTHY ALLEN

Director of Communications

resources to interrupt the cycles

of poor choices and shows them another way. The Mount Vernon EAJP offers clients (the innocent, the not guilty, and the guilty) opportunities to effectuate change and create a brighter future for themselves and their families.

We look forward to continuing working with the stakeholders to expand this trailblazing court program to all jurisdictions in the county and state,” said Clare J. Degnan, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Westchester County.

The YSOW hosted a conference on June 15, 2022 at Westchester Community College Mount Vernon Campus in recognition of the one-year anniversary. “The conference was widely attended and focused on how our collective actions through the MV EAJP and Motion for Justice (MFJ) initiatives have allowed our community to reimagine justice for emerging adult offenders between the ages of 18-25 here in the City of Mount Vernon, NY and transform their lives to be contributing members of our society”, said Joanne Dunn, Executive Director of the YSOW.

“I heard a wise man say that we should “make our neighborhoods a decent and safe place to live”. With that said, we celebrate the one-year anniversary of OUR Emerging Adult Justice Part which in my mind has established our collective commitment to making our “neighborhood” a decent and safe place to live. By thinking outside the box, a year ago we collaboratively created an alternative to incarceration whereby we have poured into our young adults the tools to become productive members of our society. It has been my distinct honor to have collaborated with so many professionals that understand their duty and obligation. May our works speak for us!” said Mount Vernon City Court Judge, Nichelle Johnson

“The Jewel of Westchester”



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.
Mayor Office

SHAWYN PATTERSON-HOWARD, MPA
Mayor

City Hall, One Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY, 10550
Phone: (914) 840-4013 Fax: (914) 665-6173

TIMOTHY ALLEN
Director of Communications

“The Jewel of Westchester”