

# Non-violent offenders do their time landscaping, cleaning up county

By PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

No leg irons. No uniforms. No gun-toting guards.

But they are technically jail inmates. And, they are working off their debt to society — although, "there's no heavy lifting," as Joe explained.

Joe (who asked that his last name not be used) is part of WAM, a new community corrections program that — with a stretch of the imagination — might be described as a modern-day chain gang.

WAM, or Weekend Alternative for Misdemeanants, officially kicked off last weekend when a handful of nonviolent offenders did some landscaping and general cleanup at Addison Oaks, a county park in the northeast corner of Oakland County.

Joe is a 21-year-old Macomb County resident caught drinking and driving in Troy.

When he violated probation, District Judge Dennis C. Drury gave him a choice: 15 days in jail or six weekends on WAM.

WAM has been in the plan-

**"Many of these defendants don't have any money. Sending them to jail because they can't pay a fine compounds the problem."**

**Judge Terrence Brennan**  
44th District Court

ning stage for some time, but Saturday and Sunday were the first times nonviolent offenders were actually on the job.

"I had other things I'd rather be doing," Joe said. "But on balance, it wasn't a bad experience. In fact, I was surprised by the positive attitude."

Not a bad experience? Positive attitude? See what a stretch it is to compare WAM to a chain gang?

"These aren't really prisoners," said George J. Miller, manager of community corrections. "These are your neighbors who goofed up."

Joe and eight other people who "goofed up" were allowed

to work off their time because it saves the county money. It costs \$12 to \$15 a day for the county to have somebody in WAM, according to Miller, compared to \$68 to house them in the Oakland County jail.

"It also helps ease overcrowding at the jail," said Michael W. Zehnder, director of Public Services within the executive's office that oversees community corrections.

Sheriff John F. Nichols explained the overcrowding situation to judges and police chiefs earlier this year and urged local communities not to send people convicted of nonviolent misdemeanors to the county jail.

It was at the sheriff's suggestion that WAM came into existence.

The program has a less obvious side benefit, according to Judge Terrence H. Brennan of the 44th District Court in Royal Oak.

"Many of these nonviolent defendants don't have any money. Sending them to jail because they can't pay a fine

compounds the problem."

And, surprisingly, the county gets an "enthusiastic" work crew, judging by the performance of Joe and his cohorts over the weekend, said Miller. "These guys weren't just going through the motions," he said. "They were working pretty well."

"Most are embarrassed to be there," he said, "so they're anxious to get it over with."

Nobody came close to strain-

**"These aren't really prisoners. These are your neighbors who goofed up."**

**George Miller**  
Manager of Community Corrections

ing themselves or passing out from exertion, Joe acknowledged. "But we worked continuously."

Equally important, said Joe, the weekend scheduled enabled him to keep the job he has been working for about six months. He had previously managed a pizza store, but his current job is a step up.

The first WAM work crews were all male defendants. But that won't always be the case, according to Miller.

"Women defendants will have the same option," he said, "just as soon as we get some."

**GRAND OPENING!**

**CANTERBURY GOLF SHOP**

Located in Olde World Canterbury Village

Discover a truly unique variety of golf gift items and home accents collected from all over the world!

**OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK!**

Located in Olde World Canterbury Village, 3 miles off I-75, Exit #83, North, Jollyn Rd. Minutes from the Palace of Auburn Hills!

*\*Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day and Easter Sunday*

*Gifts from the Sea*  
*by M.B. Jeweler*

**M.B. JEWELRY DESIGN & MFG. LTD.**  
Applegate Square • 29847 Northwestern Hwy. • Southfield, MI 48034  
(810) 356-7007

**views of veneto**

**before.** Veneto's ladder-like towers, shown rising from a low storage base, offer endless display possibilities. In fruitwood or oak veneer.

**after.** Whatever your storage, entertainment or display needs, Veneto's modular elements can accommodate them, beautifully. Shown, **Sale \$2685.**

**butler's pantry.** Veneto visits the dining room as a contemporary interpretation of your grandmother's china cabinet. Shown, **Sale \$2620.**

**concert hall.** Your A/V system never looked better or sounded so good as when it's housed in our Veneto wall system. Shown, **Sale \$2042.**

Prices include delivery within our primary zones on orders over \$300.

From concealing to revealing, create the best view for you with Veneto. Save 20% in every department during our Storewide Summer Sale.

**workbench**

BIRMINGHAM 234 SOUTH HUNTER BOULEVARD, SOUTH OF MAPLE 810-540-3377  
ROCHESTER HILLS 1260 WALTON BOULEVARD, GREAT OAKS MALL 810-656-3050 • ANN ARBOR 410 N. FOURTH AVENUE AT KERRYTOWN 313-668-4888 • NOVI 26056 INGERSOLL DRIVE, NOW TOWN CENTER 810-349-8800  
ALL STORES OPEN SUNDAYS  
FOR EXCEPTIONAL SAVINGS, VISIT OUR NOVI CLEARANCE DEPARTMENT.

**Vic's World Class Market**

**AUGUST SAVINGS**

**AT VIC'S WORLD CLASS MARKETS**

Sale Dates  
**AUGUST 10 - AUGUST 16**

<b>FRESH BROCCOLI</b> <b>69¢</b> bunch	<b>CALIFORNIA SEEDLESS GREEN GRAPES</b> <b>69¢</b> lb.
<b>U.S.D.A. CHOICE BONELESS RIB EYE STEAKS</b> <b>\$3<sup>99</sup></b> lb.	<b>FRESH BAKED ITALIAN BREAD</b> <b>BUY 1, GET 1 FREE</b>
<b>NEW ZEALAND ORANGE ROUGHY</b> <b>\$5<sup>49</sup></b> lb.	<b>KRAKUS HAM</b> <b>\$2<sup>99</sup></b> lb.

**NOVI**  
42875 Grand River  
(248) 305-7333

We reserve the right to limit quantities

**BEVERLY HILLS**  
31201 Southfield Rd.  
(810) 647-4646