

# Out-County Needs Juvenile Services--Neville

By DENNIS PAJOT

"The best program for the prevention of juvenile delinquency anywhere is to keep the

good youngsters good," says John M. Neville, juvenile court referee for Western Wayne County. He's been officiating since

athletic contests more than twice as long as he's been officiating proceedings in juvenile court, so it's a good bet he knows what he's talking about.

Neville, a chesty bantam who seems to have to concentrate upon relaxing while leaning back in the chair at his desk, has been an athletic referee for 33 years and juvenile court referee for 15.

His hair is light and receding. Otherwise a person might question those figures given by this adjudicator of wayward youths' problems.

Just like the referee on the sports field, he asserts that it's the procedure of the court first to decide cases on the basis of law and then to try to help the offender with a variety of social services.

"ANY LENIENCY on the part of this court is dictated by limited facilities and personnel," he proclaims in reply to popular finger-pointing at the courts as the soft shoulder at the top of the long arm of the law.

By "limited facilities," he refers to overcrowded state juvenile schools where inmates may be committed to stay until their 19th birthday, and the overcrowded Wayne County Youth Home used for temporary detention pending case dispositions.

The campaign being waged by Neville's boss, Wayne County Juvenile Court Judge James H. Lincoln, for an out-county youth home and short-term rehabilitation center seeks to provide a median alternative.

## Few Dope Cases Hit Juvenile Court

Two juveniles from the suburban communities of Wayne County have been cited into juvenile court on charges of possession and sale of marijuana in the past 18 months.

"We are alert to the situation, however. We look upon it as a serious type of involvement, regardless of some public opinions," he said.

"Any case coming to the court is given serious consideration."

THE GREATER majority of the delinquency offenses brought before the court involve youths accused of breaking and entering (burglary) and unlawful driving away of an automobile (auto theft or auto borrowing without permission).

"The type of case causing the greatest concern to the court is where a juvenile has committed assault, particularly when a weapon is used," said Neville.

"We've had more in the last year than in other years. It seems to be following a nationwide pattern. The generation we're working with today has an unusual exposure to violence," said the out-county stand-in for Wayne County Juvenile Court Judge James H. Lincoln.

"WE LOOK UPON these as extremely serious offenses requiring the close attention of the court. We want to do everything we can do to minimize their occurrence."

"The breaking and entering (B & E) offenders and those who take cars unlawfully who have committed their first offense, we try to give probation," said Neville.

"Until such time as we are able to send youth to a short term rehabilitation center, the child who will benefit from our detention program will not be among first offenders," he explained.

Six others under 17 years of age have been cited on charges of possession of the illegal narcotic.

John Neville, juvenile court referee for Western Wayne County, said, "We haven't had a great amount of cases before the court, although we have reason to suspect use of marijuana is on the increase among youngsters out here."

HE EXPLAINED that despite rumors of widespread marijuana traffic among school-age youths, court cases are few because police are concentrating their efforts on getting to the sources of supply.

"Very often the juvenile that gets caught is a sampler. He's not the type of offender we're trying to run down," said Neville.

Also, he said, in many cases of suspected use, it is difficult to get evidence that will stand up in court.

Vernon Foster, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Wayne County supervisor in the 26th (Livonia-Flymouth) District, calls the change to a 26-district county board "refreshing."

In his campaign opening statement, Foster, a Livonia businessman, said, "It is refreshing in an era of more government and bigger government, more agencies, more bureaus and more departments, that the new Wayne County governmental plan reduces a ponderous 135-member board to a workable 26-member directly elected board."

"The immediate advantages are very apparent. First under the new plan, the elected supervisor is directly responsible to the people of the district for his activities while on the board. Thus the will of the people can be more clearly felt."

"I offer a business-like approach to county government. Private industry cannot afford the luxury of duplicity of function and neither can government. It appears that whenever public costs increase, government merely attempts to increase the tax load while giving only lip-service to economy measures."

"I have had a good deal of business experience and I am well acquainted as a businessman in this area. I believe that this experience and my knowledge of this district will be of great value in providing the kind of representation that the people of the 26th district should expect to receive."

Burglary offenders cite many reasons to the court, said Neville, setting no particular pattern.

Unlawful use of auto cases mostly fall into the category of youths who take an opportunity for a joy ride.

"The owner could do much to decrease the situation," Neville said, "by locking his car."

ANOTHER THING the court is finding serious, according to Neville, "is the ease with which young people can gain access to alcoholic beverages."

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Foster Praises Remap

THE NEED FOR increased services has been most dramatic in suburban out-county, points out Neville.

Since 1953, when he was appointed referee for the then new out-county branch office, the Western Wayne County population has grown from 300,000 persons to 1,250,000.

His first staff of three probation officers and one stenographer has increased to just 10 field workers, one supervisor, and four clerical helpers.

THIS STAFF helps Neville process 70 to 100 cases of juvenile delinquency monthly (840 to 1,200 annually) and 450 cases of juvenile traffic law violators monthly (5,400 annually).

His jurisdiction covers 420 square miles compared to the 128 square miles in the City of Detroit; it has 34 political subdivisions, 30 police departments, and 37 school districts to service.

Also, whereas the 1953 intent was to serve boys delinquency cases only, the Western Wayne branch of juvenile court now serves boys cases, boys probation, girls probation and juvenile traffic court.

It separated from the main Wayne County court, the Western Wayne County branch would be the second largest in the state—next to the case load of Detroit's needs.

"DEMANDS FOR service from this office have mushroomed in the past two years," says Neville. "The out-county's first suburbanites were new families, young married couples whose youngsters are now reaching an age in need of service."

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His courtroom is able to handle about 70 per cent of the cases brought to it. The other 30 per cent go to the Detroit office of the juvenile court for one of two reasons:

First, because of a need to hold offenders in detention at the Youth Home near the downtown court.

Second, because "the concerned party has a right to ask for the judge's attention."

As referee, Neville is appointed to hear cases in the judge's behalf. The referee's written recommendations, after hearing a case, are forwarded to the judge for review.

When approved, the recommendations become the judge's court order.

"PROBATION REMAINS the most frequently used and most successful action," says Neville.

"The rate of repeaters," he explains, "remains close to the national average of 30 to 35 per cent of those placed on probation by the court. In other words, 65 to 70 per cent make a decent adjustment after probation."

"If we could concentrate on those qualifying for probation programs, we could decrease the rate of repeaters," he asserts.

He notes that his 11 probation officers have such large numbers to handle they can spend only limited time with each, unless the probationer gives some indication that extra time will be especially productive.

He noted that an organized citizen-court youth authority

for community preventative service and assistance in handling post-court juveniles would be beneficial.

A GREAT NUMBER of cases do not fall to extreme offenses are diverted to existing social agencies and other community resources, he said.

Many juvenile offenders never reach the doors of the court building, either, due to rehabilitative work of police officers before a serious offense is committed and due to lack of sufficient evidence in other cases, said Neville.

Nationwide statistics on juvenile crime reveal that if every reported offense were committed by a single person, every juvenile would have to be an offender.

That this is false can be attributed in a great part to the fact that "most communities already provide all the recreational-social adjustment services they are financially able to," in Neville's words.

In 33 years of traveling from community to community, he has had an uncommon opportunity to know that most youths confine their larcenies to stolen bases.