

## **La Crosse County Drug Court is a Perfect Example of Problem Solving**

Lately the changes in the criminal justice system of La Crosse have been a common conversation starter around town. Between the local news stations and the La Crosse Tribune, the public has gotten a great view into what goes on locally in both the jail and the courthouse. As someone who has had the privilege of being a part of the local system through internships, I have an immense respect for the way these facilities are run on a day-to-day basis. One program that doesn't get enough credit is the Drug Court of La Crosse County. Instead of having an individual simply serve their time in jail or prison, the program seeks to address the crippling affects of drug addiction on an individual basis. Those involved get to know the participants and help them address their needs and return to the community as more contributing member of society. Through positive reinforcement, participants are encouraged to seek employment, do community service and, most importantly, learn to live out in the real world without their drug addiction one day at a time. The program was designed as a way to help save the county money, but has done so much more to improve the overall criminal justice system in this area. Ethical questions surround the program, with critics saying it's "too liberal" and lets criminal's "off the hook", but the requirements for the program are rigorous and research surrounding such programs suggest that it is more effective than jail or prison. In counties where such programs do not currently exist I would highly recommend they be established. With government spending a primary issue, drug court programs may be more appealing for their money-saving appeal, but it is important for the community that these problems are being individually addressed and I would urge that La Crosse County be the model for the set-up of future programs elsewhere.