

Court Watch End of the Year Report – 2018 – Ann Pinna, Chair

Court Watch has been in existence since 2011 and is still going strong. We have a team of 9 who are devoted to its mission that Court Watch continues as a vibrantly-effective group which seeks to ensure fair and equal justice for domestic violence victims—and for everyone--- who goes before the judges in Dutchess County Family Court.

The following is a highlighted list of some of the activities of Court Watch for 2018:

- April 10 – Ann Negrin, a liaison between the police and victims of domestic violence, spoke to our Group at the Adriance Memorial Library about the problems that police have when going to a call for a disturbance involving domestic violence. She also spoke about the problems that victims of domestic violence face when confronting their abusers.
- February 14 – Sandy Lash, accompanied by Ann Pinna, spoke at the Greenburgh Public Library to AAUW members of the Westchester Branch about our Court Watch Program. From her talk, many were inspired to look into initiating their own Court Watch Program in their AAUW Westchester branch. We extended an invitation to them to call upon us for any assistance they may require in creating their own court watch program whenever the need arises.
- March Ann Pinna wrote an article about “Court Watch and Domestic Violence” and it was published in the Poughkeepsie Journal. The purpose was to educate the public and raise awareness about domestic violence in Dutchess County. Several positive comments were made about it.
- June 8 Mr. Chu, Esq., Attorney for the Child in Poughkeepsie Family Court, spoke to our Court Watch team at the Boardman Rd. Library. He regaled us with stories of his youth and how he became an attorney, and also spoke of his experiences in the courtroom.
- October 11 Ann Pinna spoke at an AAUW membership meeting about Court Watch, what it does and why we do it. It was followed by a talk given by Judge Tracey MacKenzie who spoke about her experiences as a judge in Family Court. The AAUW Meeting was held at the Poughkeepsie Children’s Home.
- Oct.- Dec. A series of meetings were conducted by the Court Watch Team to discuss ways to improve the Observation Form used by monitors to evaluate court proceedings. As a result of suggestions, the Observation Form was updated and modified to make it more effective and “more user-friendly” for data entry purposes.
- Nov. 29 A letter was received from Dr. Mavis Morton, a professor at Guelph University in Ontario, Canada, who was conducting a research project on court watch programs in Canada and needed information from our group to assist her with her research project. A Conference Call was set up to discuss our program with graduate students from Guelph who took notes and also recorded our findings. According to Professor Morton, both she and her students benefitted immensely from our one and one half hour

interview. They hope to use our suggestions with members of their Ontario community to set up their own court watch program in Canada in the future.

Dec - Jan 2019 -A series of meetings were held to discuss the Observation Form used by monitors to evaluate court proceedings. After several discussions, many modifications were made to update the form and make it more effective for data entry. Monitors continue to modify the Observation Form on an on-going basis to optimize the efficient collection and analysis of all accumulated data.

Summary: What does Court Watch do?

Monitors continue to go to court at least once per month and some attend court once per week. Monitors talk to attorneys, make observations, and fill out Observation Forms. The information they collect is entered into a data system and, after many cases and concerns have been cited, a quantitative analysis is eventually performed for the purpose of exposing any systemic issues that have arisen in the court. Following that, a determination is made regarding areas where improvements in the judicial system can be made. In addition, the Court Watch Team invites attorneys and other individuals with domestic violence experience to speak at various meetings throughout the year in order to educate and provide their professional knowledge and expertise about court procedures and to explain any concerns and questions the team may have associated with victims of domestic violence. Court Watch also meets frequently to hold "Group-Share" sessions where members of the team provide strategies and assistance with any problems that fellow monitors may face in the courtroom. In the end, the Court Watch Team is proud they are making a difference and helping the victims of domestic violence, court personnel, and the community, in general, in our common fight for fair and equal justice for all.

Court Monitoring Team: Mary Lou Davis, Joanne Dyson, Mara Goldstone, Liz Graham, Sandy Lash, Flo Mondanaro, Margaret Nijhuis, Ann Pinna, Sandy Sherman