

New York Therapeutic Communities, Inc.

Winter 2008

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES: NEW YORK STATE TACKLES SMOKING IN TREATMENT, JUST LIKE ALCOHOL, ILLEGAL & PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



A long-recognized public health hazard will now be addressed in drug treatment programs (above, the Serendipity Health Fair).

It's the talk of every residential treatment program in the state. By July 24, 2008, clients in substance abuse treatment will no longer be able to smoke, not even outdoors. Of course, smoking inside buildings has long been forbidden by state law, but this will be different. For the first time, New York's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) is mandating that residents must tackle their nicotine dependence just as they tackle their other addictions.

The conventional wisdom in treatment has been that, as the lesser of evils, smoking should be tolerated. It certainly serves as a calming influence during the stress of undergoing major challenges to a person's behavior and attitudes, such as occurs in therapeutic communities like those of NYTC. Yet the commissioner of OASAS, Karen Carpenter-Palumbo, has

decided the evidence is too abundant: those who continue to smoke after treatment are far more likely to return to abusing other drugs. The addictive behavior associated with nicotine is essentially the same. The growing (though by no means unanimous) consensus in the field is that nicotine must be confronted for treatment to work most effectively.

The new policy, however, raises a number of questions to be addressed. Doesn't a client have the personal right to smoke? Won't it be much more difficult for persons to complete treatment? Will smokers be less likely to agree to treatment if they know they can't smoke? Don't addicts (and programs) already have enough to deal with? Will smokers appreciate the need to quit, when the short-term danger is so much less than for other drugs? What should the penalties be for those clients caught smoking, compared with those for using other drugs or alcohol? Can strategies besides nicotine patches (supplied by OASAS) be used? What about clinical staff members, many of whom are former addicts who also smoke? And what of treatment programs in settings where OASAS does not set the rules, such as the in-prison *Stay'n Out*?

One fact is clear, though: about 90% of NYTC clients smoke cigarettes and, until recently, so did the majority of agency staff. With only 21% of Americans still smoking, the need of people in treatment for anti-smoking measures cannot be denied. NYTC, Inc. fully supports the new effort. ♦

- ▶ Probation Graduations
- ▶ Three Aegis Awards
- ▶ Within *Stay'n Out*
- ▶ Always Giving Back



DID YOU KNOW?
That **438,000 Americans die** each year of tobacco-related diseases, **more than by all deaths** from HIV/AIDS, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders **combined**?

New York State
SMOKERS' QUITLINE
1-866-NY-QUITS
1-866-697-8487
www.nysmokefree.com

DID YOU KNOW?
That **smoking cessation interventions** during substance abuse treatment are associated with a **25% increased** likelihood of **long-term abstinence** from alcohol and illicit drugs?

See inside back page for sources



A Message from the President

Scattered through the pages of this newsletter are many individuals who each in their own way help define NYTC, Inc. Of course, there are the three very special persons honored this year with the AEGIS AWARD who embody the larger family whom we've always depended upon. And, without doubt, our clients and graduates make everything we do worth our while. Yet our agency staff also serve as often unsung heroes. Whether program directors, counselors or bookkeepers, each person contributes something unique. Each of them plays a critical role in facilitating the transformation of human lives, often despite being underpaid and in a very challenging field. I have always been very fortunate in those who have worked for the agency, and so I here salute their creativity, their passion and their dedication, and on behalf of all of our clients and graduates, I offer my gratitude.

MORE PROBATION AMBULATORY GRADUATIONS: QUEENS & KJOP



On October 19, 2007, nineteen very proud men and women graduated from the *Herman Williams NYTC Probation Ambulatory Program* serving residents of Queens. The annual graduation, the first for the program which was launched in 2006, took place at the New York City Department of Probation offices on Jamaica Avenue, where the NYTC, Inc. program operates. Vincent Carrique, Assistant Commissioner for Probation (clapping above, with Program Director Cesar Sosa) gave the keynote speech, while Pedro Paez (top right) was the valedictorian.



Meanwhile, in the offices of the *Probation Ambulatory Program* in Brooklyn, a graduation was held on November 15 for six young people who completed a 26-week curriculum designed by NYTC, Inc. specifically for the Kings Juvenile Offenders Program (KJOP). This program of the Department of Probation serves juveniles in Brooklyn convicted as adults for violent offenses. Karen Armstrong, former Branch Chief of KJOP, and current Branch Chief Nora Santos (above), received bouquets for their dedication and hard work. ♦

LYNNETTE RATCLIFF'S DAY: BROOKLYN PROBATION PROGRAM

My day begins when I arrive at 8:30 in the offices of NYC Probation, where probationers already are waiting. I sign them in, and then begin my daily round, recording new clients on the OASAS (Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services) website, taking phone calls from 210 Jorelemon Street for probationers who have failed a drug test and scheduling an assessment, entering referred probationers on the Pending board when they come in for their first appointment, doing weekly billing statements and monthly reports for the NYTC, Inc. main office, tracking those on Medicaid and handing out \$4 Metrocards when they come in for an individual counseling session, sending out letters to clients who miss a session, with copies to their counselor and probation officer, and many other tasks too numerous to mention. My Staff Aide Sarah Graham, who is a resident of the *Serendipity II* program, is invaluable assisting me. Since I see just about everybody when they come in, I get to know some of them as they wait, asking how they are doing, sometimes hearing their problems, when I become something of a counselor. Everybody here calls me the glue of the program, but we all work so well together- Monica Williams our Director, counselor Pedro Varela, and the probation officers. My job drives me crazy everyday, but I love what I do. I love seeing the results- it keeps me green and it keeps me well.

By Lynnette Ratcliff, Administrative Assistant

IN OUR 30TH YEAR, HONORING THREE PILLARS OF THE NYTC FAMILY



The three 2007 AEGIS awardees represent three dimensions of our extended family: the governmental, the non-profit sector, and the faith community— as well as embodying the human spirit which has made each such an outstanding individual.

Martin S. Horn serves as Commissioner of both New York City Probation and Correction (the first to do so in the city's history). He has known Ron Williams since the early days of *Stay'n Out*, when he worked in New York State's Correctional Services. Even then, he was an effective advocate for inmate services and contracted programming using outside agencies. In 2005, he facilitated the inauguration of the first Probation Ambulatory Program with NYTC, Inc. in Brooklyn.



Fatima Goldman has been Executive Director of the *Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies* since 2003. The Federation represents numerous agencies which serve over two million persons each year. Since coming to the Federation, she has been a tireless supporter of our work, helping NYTC, Inc. obtain two new board members, enlarging the grant which the agency receives from the *New York Times* Neediest Cases Fund for clients completing our programs, and honoring NYTC with the *2006 Keystone Award* for unique contributions to the social services sector.



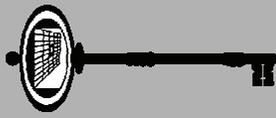
The Very Reverend James Parks Morton, the former dean of the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, heads the Interfaith Center of New York. Besides being an internationally renowned advocate for social justice and religious openness, he has also been the spiritual mentor for Ron Williams and the NYTC family. His has been the insight that even secular agencies can have a spiritual underpinning— understanding spirit as something fundamental to all human beings of whatever faith or non-faith. ♦



Our thanks to board members Gail Allen and Luis Flores-Hernandez, and to Howard Josepher of *Exponents, Inc.* for purchasing sponsorships.



Martin Horn (top); Fatima Goldman flanked by Board Treasurer Stewart Kahn and Ron Williams (second from top); Assistant Commissioner Kathleen Coughlin of NYC Department of Correction, Deputy Commissioner of Probation Rick Levy, and Board Member Dr. Harry K. Wexler (third from top); Pamela and Rev. James Parks Morton at table (bottom); Rev. Morton with Board Chair Sidney Baumgarten, Esq. (top right); Fatima Goldman with Stewart Kahn (bottom right).



Voices from Within

Correctional facilities do not often allow reporters to visit, but the Bayview Correctional Facility for women, on the corner of 11th Avenue and 20th Street in Manhattan, made an exception for Chris Lombardi of the local *Chelsea Now* weekly newspaper. One of a series of articles on the prison, the following is taken from their profile of *Stay'n Out*.

At Bayview, *Stay'n Out* of trouble, going deep...

Chelsea Now, July 11-17, 2007

Darlene, all of 5-feet, 5-inches tall, sat calmly as she faced her *Stay'n Out* counselor, Paula Martin. "This is my sixth state bid [separate incarceration] in nine years."

Martin's breath caught when she heard that, she says now. She'd seen women who had been paroled, re-arrested, convicted, and repeated the cycle twice, three times, even four times. But "your sixth state bid? I am going to give you the business!" Martin told the younger woman, in the scolding tone of a big sister, "We are really going to give you a hard time."

When asked about her life before she entered the prison system, *Darlene* answers with one word: "Heroin." Every time she was released, she says, heroin was there- and so were her old patterns, her tendency toward irrational anger and passivity in the face of what others wanted. During those years, *Darlene* completed numerous drug treatment programs, but nothing had really changed, she said.

"In those programs, I could just sit and be quiet," says *Darlene*. "I didn't have to say anything. At the end, they give you a certificate, and nothing's changed." That ended at Bayview, she said.

Over time and with much prodding, *Stay'n Out* taught her how to be more honest with herself and others- and to ask for what she wanted. She learned to observe, inside herself, "the fine line where things stop being rational and start being irrational," she says. She also finds comfort in the fact that NYTC runs transition programs, like its Serendipity women's residence in Brooklyn, and support groups beyond that, so that even after parole, "my recovery has to continue, and will."

On the first day of the program, *Darlene* and the others told *Chelsea Now*, everyone is given a blank

page and told to write down their answer to the question: Who am I?

"No one had ever asked me to think about that before," says *Darlene*.

That central question, says *Stay'n Out* director Paula Martin, is essential to her "ladies" acquiring the emotional tools they need.

Stay'n Out's program is designed to last six to twelve months, but some women stay longer. *Sholonda*, a 32 year-old college-educated mother of three, stayed in for 13 months before graduating this past April. She told *Chelsea Now* that when she came to *Stay'n Out* in early 2006, she firmly believed that she was not addicted to drugs and didn't need therapy.

Sholonda, a polished young woman with well-oiled curls and a professional demeanor, said that as an only child, "I've always been someone who can manipulate and get what I wanted.... I came in [to the program,] and thought, with my vocabulary, my level of articulation, I can breeze right through this, and say nothing... Overall, I was not willing to work on anything." But demands by counselors and peers that she be honest, she said, eventually got her to engage. "They did not deal with me as an inmate, but as an individual."

Sholonda said that the tools she learned at *Stay'n Out* have helped her strengthen her relationship with her 14 year-old son. "I've gone down to the visiting room with them, brought the 'Who am I?' sheet and had my son fill it out," she said. "I've used other exercises to get to know how he feels about having a mom in prison." Parenting skills and classes, a staple throughout Bayview, are particularly central in *Stay'n Out*, 95 percent of whose members have at least one child...

Another mother in *Stay'n Out* is Doris Romio, whose children are adults, since she has been in prison for nearly 27 years. She told *Chelsea Now* that when her 33 year-old son learned she had applied to *Stay'n Out*, "he was like. 'Ma, you been in prison so many years. Why do you still need a drug treatment program?'" The answer, she said, was that she wasn't finished.

"Before some of the things that happened in my life, I didn't speak on it," says Doris. "It was easier to get high."

When she began to talk to *Chelsea Now*, Doris's voice was so soft that it was hard to hear her. During her first 20 years in lockup, at Bedford Hills, "I thought I did a lot of work," she says. She earned

"On the first day of the program, everyone is given a blank page and told to write down their answer to the question: Who am I?"

a bachelor's degree from Mercy College and had begun a master's degree before that program was shut down after the end of federal Pell grants for prisoners. She helped found the prison's AIDS prevention unit and co-wrote a book about it, "Breaking the Walls of Silence" (Overlook Press, 1998). And she completed more than one drug treatment program. But none of it, she said, addressed the hollow space inside her, the space that only drug use seemed to fill.

"When we had that paper 'Who am I?' I was stuck. I didn't know what to write," says Doris, also a longtime mentor for younger inmates. It took Stay'n Out's active, persistent program of confrontation, counseling and reflection, she says, to get her to recognize what was blocking her, including her feelings of being overwhelmed by her family commitments. "I'm a caretaker," she says. "It was a lot of pressure on me."

Doris's voice grew louder and more confident as she told how two counselors had urged her to look at her own responses to pressure. "Now I had two different people- Mr. Gonzales, Ms. Martin- who

don't know me, and both were telling me, "This is something you have to work on."

Like Sholonda, Doris says she now talks more easily to her children, especially the daughter she left behind when the girl was only seven months old: "What she remembered of me was my smell," says Doris.

Now Doris and her daughter talk about the future, about when Doris will finally be paroled in a few years. She told Chelsea Now that she hopes to complete her master's degree, that she wants to work "in a social services field..."

For Doris Romio, whose path through addiction has been the longest, the work that she has done at Stay'n Out has brought her to more solid ground, making her less dependent on the invincible armor drugs can briefly provide.

"Before, when I was using cocaine, I felt very powerful, and when I wasn't I felt low," she says, not so quietly. "I had no self-esteem, no sense of me, so I would take more.... But now," she says, "I know who I am. And I don't need that false courage." ♦

Susan Greaves: Working and Caring at STAY'N OUT

Susan Greaves, the new Unit Director of the Stay'n Out program in the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility on Staten Island, first joined the agency in 2000. Here she talks about her job:

“ When I applied for this job, I had no idea it was in a prison. I remember coming for the interview and saying, 'I don't know if I can work here.' But Tony Ortiz, director of Stay'n Out's male program, said to me, 'All I want is someone who cares about these men.' Every significant adult male in my life has been in prison. I have a son doing fifteen to life. So how could I not care?

I have a criminal history, and come from a criminal family. When I was 12, my brother's father would take me and my brother on armed robberies. I didn't take the GED until I was forty-one. I didn't get my first job until I was forty-three. When I got that first job as a photographer in a big corporation, I was so amazed at myself; I felt I had won the lottery. But looking back, luck had little to do with it. I was ready. I did the footwork that gave me the chance to grow.

For new Stay'n Out participants who haven't been in this type of program before, it's a foreign language, even a foreign land. That's what I experienced when I accepted this job. The language they used, phrases like "Hold your belly!" made me uncomfortable at first. I felt they were aggravating everyone, and I didn't understand why. In reality, I didn't understand the process of treatment. Today I know that we teach right living, and that we're all in this together. I like to say I belong to the spiritual

underground, and I am here to raise consciousness.

So now when I screen new clients, I give them a synopsis of what they're going to experience, to warn them. I tell them things are going to be exaggerated, because that's the only way we can reach them. And I believe that, wholeheartedly. I've seen how in the last eight years that these men do change. They resist at first, of course. They don't want to be confronted with their negative attitudes and behaviors. But as they go through Stay'n Out, they find themselves confronting others about their negativity. Then they begin to understand for themselves what we've been talking about. A light bulb goes on, just like it did for me when I was in treatment. They're buying into the concept that Peter does pay for Paul. That's one of the things we teach them here: that you are your brother's keeper.

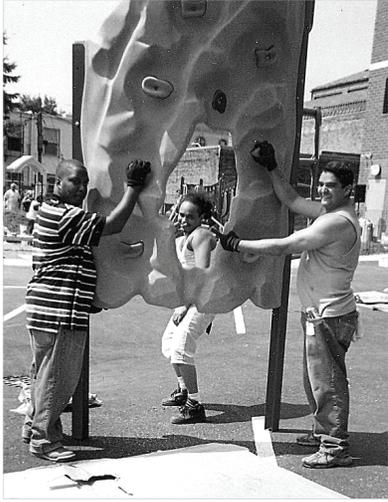
When I started this job, I thought that my past would be my hook for them, but it wasn't. It was my son. Once they found out that I was an 'out-mate' (someone in the family of an 'in-mate') they taught me how to be there for him. And they taught me how to be tough.

It's funny, but I've changed since I started here. I learned from the men that you've got to be real, or they will sense it. Any issues you haven't resolved,



Continued inside back page ➔

SERENDIPITY I & II IT'S ALL ABOUT GIVING BACK



From the very beginning, the programs of NYTC, Inc. have understood the importance of giving back to society as part of the recovery process. But participation in the life of the community was not really possible until the first community-based *Serendipity* program opened in 1990. In 1994, residents of the then co-ed program began delivering meals for *God's Love We Deliver*, which serves homebound AIDS patients. Ever since, three days a week, 52 weeks a year, the meals are delivered to *Serendipity I* where they are divided

Lively Aftercare for Women Who Have Completed *Serendipity II*

Once residents of the *Serendipity* programs move out of the facility, they return for bi-weekly aftercare sessions. The women who have completed *Serendipity II*, ten to fifteen at any given time, meet every second Tuesday evening with Program Director Lisa Alexander, and discuss how they are doing, problems they face, and sharing their breakthroughs. In September last year, they also found a new way to give back to *Serendipity II* when they held "An Aftercare Evening" with their peers still in the program: cooking them dinner, singing songs and doing skits, telling their stories, and providing a much-appreciated inspiration. ♦

Serendipity Celebration Honors 45 Graduates

Robert Hamm, a graduate of *Stay'n Out* and Supervisor of Employment Services at EPRA in Manhattan, gave the keynote speech at the 17th annual *Serendipity* graduation on September 28, 2007, at Brooklyn Job Corps. Forty-five graduates from both the male and female programs were honored, including Ronald Carnegie, *Serendipity I* participant who passed away the day after he moved out of the residence. ♦

up between the two volunteers who then deliver them to persons in the immediate Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. Over the years, *Serendipity* residents have delivered an estimated 57,500 meals, thus providing them with the practical experience of "giving back" in return for the treatment services which have benefited them. As a resident once put it the first time he volunteered, "After we were finished with the deliveries and went back to our facility, I felt like I had just saved the world." In a small way, perhaps he had.

This past year, the male residents of *Serendipity I* also helped build a playground on a previously empty lot (see left), working with *Tilden House*, a residence for young mothers, and Home Depot. They also participated in a community workday in Red Hook, Brooklyn, thus earning tickets to a show at Madison Square Garden. In past years, *Serendipity* men have painted murals, helped put on health fairs, engaged in voter registration, spoken in Albany before legislators, and participated in the annual AIDS Walk in Central Park.

The women of the *Serendipity II* program, just down the block from *Serendipity I*, also engage in voter registration, public advocacy and the AIDS Walk. This holiday season, the ladies discovered how much fun helping others can be when they sang Christmas carols at the CABS Nursing Home (see below) and came back bubbling.

Six alumni of the *Serendipity* programs have also found a particularly effective way of serving the community- they now are *Serendipity* staff helping others to take the same journey which they once took. ♦



Tehran Therapeutic Community, Iran

Founded in 2001, Iran's first therapeutic community has fifty residents. Its structure closely follows that of *Daytop* in New York, where the director, Mohammad Reza Abdollahnejad, spent an internship last year. Mr. Abdollahnejad notes that it will be important to adapt the program's structure to Iranian needs, including providing more emphasis on spiritual and vocational issues than currently has been done.



2009 Conference, Peru

The next global conference of the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities (WFTC) will be held in Lima, Peru in February 2009, rather than in Kunming, China, as originally planned. Ronald Williams, President of NYTC, is a member of the planning committee organizing the event. For more information, contact info@uftc.org. ♦

➔ SUSAN GREAVES (CONTINUED)

they'll bring them out. They have nothing else to do but sit and watch us all day, and they notice everything. The inmates don't realize it, but they intuitively read people and situations. They have many more skills than they think they do.

This becomes a two-way street. I rarely think about their crimes. I was taught to look at the patterns in their lives, and the negative thinking that goes with those patterns, and I know that I'm not better than they are. It's just that for now I'm better off. These men are sensitive, they're sentimental, and they're not as tough as people make them out to be. I find that they want to respect me, and they want me to respect myself. If I curse, they don't like it. They hold me to higher standards, and I think that comes from their sentimentality. They're my brothers, they're my fathers, and they're my sons. And I think they feel that from me, because I experience it from them.

I'm always amazed, because every year Stay'n Out itself keeps changing. I've been told that it takes about ten years to learn a craft, and I'm still learning mine. I worked as a photographer for eleven years, and it was the same. These guys are going to teach us, believe me, because they've been doing their thing longer than we've been doing ours.

This is such a wonderful agency to work for. I love what I do. In many ways, I should be dead by now. The places that I've been and the things I've done, I shouldn't be alive. I sometimes think I was given whatever I needed to grow, and now this is where I'm supposed to be. ♦



Even as New York Therapeutic Communities, Inc. celebrates its thirtieth year, *Phoenix House* marks it's fourth decade of service. Founded by Ronald Williams and five other recovering addicts in 1967, *Phoenix House* set the pattern for therapeutic communities such as *Stay'n Out* and *Serendipity*, and in fact was a key member of the consortium of agencies which launched NYTC's in-prison program ten years later. Meanwhile, *Phoenix House* has continued to thrive, and now has facilities in nine states, including Texas, Florida and California. In New York city and state it operates more than thirty residential and out-patient programs for adults and adolescents, treating 2500 persons each day. This phenomenal success has led to a well-deserved reputation as one of the premier substance abuse treatment programs in the world. We salute our sister agency, and wish it continued success in the decades to come. **Website** at www.phoenixhouse.org ♦

Sources for "Did You Know?" on front page

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Annual Smoking - Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses-United States, 1997-2001
- Prochaska et al, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 2004

Upcoming Events in 2008

February	Black History Month
March	Women's History Month at <i>Serendipity II</i>
March 28	Brooklyn Probation Ambulatory Program Graduation
May 11	Mothers Day Celebration at <i>Serendipity I</i>
June 6	31st Anniversary Celebration The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Manhattan
September	National Recovery Month The <i>Serendipity</i> Graduation
October	Queens Probation Ambulatory Program Graduation The 2008 Aegis Awards
November	Recognition Day at the Arthur Kill CF <i>Stay'n Out</i>
December	Holiday Luncheon for Staff & Friends

NYTC Spotlight THE BACKROOM TEAM THAT MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE



Noreen Shipman, the outgoing Director of Finance for the agency, has this to say about those who have worked under her: *"They are officially known as the Finance Department, but they are much, much more – human resources, information technology, facilities management, operations. This is the team that handles all the infrastructure tasks that make possible NYTC's mission of programs and services. Under Alex Herrera's very skillful supervision, each of them makes an important contribution to this mission. When I joined NYTC as the chief financial officer, it was my very good fortune to have inherited such a committed and dedicated staff. As I re-vamped and expanded the role of the Department, each of them had to assume new duties. Every time I needed them to step up, they did – unflinchingly. If an unexpected assignment popped up, they handled it – efficiently, and always with an attitude of calm and cheerfulness. I will surely miss working with them. They are a dream team."*

Alex Herrera (seated above), the Chief Accountant who oversees this team as well as the agency's computers, joined the agency 17 years ago; his family is from the Dominican Republic. New York-native Rosa Nelson (standing right) has been with the agency a remarkable 28 years, and



handles payroll and human resources. Ingrid Henry (standing center) from Guyana, responsible for Medicaid billing and other tasks, joined the agency in 2002. Vanessa Hewitt (standing left) from Trinidad, has handled bookkeeping responsibilities since 2006. These four persons work out of the NYTC, Inc. administrative office in midtown Manhattan.

Meanwhile, Christine Peters (above left), also from Guyana, and Susan Cortez (above right) from the Bronx, have offices in the men's and women's *Serendipity* facilities in Brooklyn. They are responsible for ensuring that participants are signed up for public assistance and Medicaid, and for administering their Personal Needs Allowances while they are in treatment. ♦

New Probation Ambulatory Director

Monica Williams, formerly the Social Worker at NYTC, Inc.'s *Probation Ambulatory Program* in Brooklyn, became the new Program Director in July. With an LMSW credential, she has a background in social work with substance abusers, the homeless, and the mentally ill. As one of her team's first accomplishments, the program received a full three-year license from the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, a significant achievement for an innovative program only three years old. ♦

New York Therapeutic Communities, Inc.

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The Stay'n Out Fellowship

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the NYTC *Probation
Ambulatory Programs*

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Peter Fry 917-686-8739

