

## Green Bay native promotes justice reform (2.24.06)

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Dennis Maloney delivers keynote at JOSHUA fund-raiser

By Jeff Kurowski, Compass Assistant Editor

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When Green Bay native Dennis Maloney graduated from the University of Minnesota, he had the opportunity to pursue a career in the National Football League. Money in the NFL was not what it is today, but it still promised much more than his other offer - \$150 a week - to serve as manager of the Boys & Girls Club in Minneapolis. Maloney chose the latter over offers from the Kansas City Chiefs and Dallas Cowboys.

"If the Spirit ever moved me, it was in making that decision," said Maloney, who was the featured speaker at "Transforming Community, Embracing Diversity & Fairness," the second annual JOSHUA fund-raiser, held recently at Notre Dame Academy in Green Bay. "Gil Brandt was in charge of player personnel for the Cowboys back then. The teams contacted players who they were planning to draft. I had a hard time getting to sleep at night. I kept hearing the voices of the kids at the Boys & Girls Club. When Mr. Brandt called, I told him, 'Sorry, but I've got a better offer.'"

Maloney, who served the Boys & Girls Club for several years, now calls Bend, Ore., home, and he is still devoted to building the character of young people, but in a different manner. He now serves as the president of Community Justice Associates, a firm which assists justice systems with preventive and restorative strategies. Maloney, who has more than 30 years' experience in corrections and community corrections, has helped nearly 30 states revamp their juvenile justice systems through his writings on the "Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice." As director of the Deschutes County Department of Community Justice of Oregon, he initiated numerous juvenile and adult corrections programs that drew national attention.

Maloney's approach to restorative justice accounts for both the offender and the victim.

"Studies on the justice system revealed that victims don't feel restitution when an offender is locked up," he said. "They are still scared of the offender. We had to find a new way to look at justice."

"Community and restorative justice looks at what harm was suffered," he added. "How can the offender find a new pathway to good citizenship? How can the victim feel better? Let's find a plan for people who've committed wrongdoings where they are giving back and becoming a better citizen."

In Oregon, a partnership program was implemented where young offenders worked for Habitat for Humanity. To date, they have built 800 homes, said Maloney.

"They (offenders) work six days a week," he said. "Statistics show a reduction in incarceration by 72% for these juvenile offenders. What's hard time for offenders? Hard time is getting up and going to work. If we're going to be tough, let's be productive. Lying around in a prison bed is not tough or productive."

Offenders build homes behind prison walls and construct them at the site, where they work with the new owner.

"The key passing ceremonies are emotional," said Maloney. "Everyone who has worked on the home passes the key until it is in the hands of the new owner. A grandparent of an offender came to a ceremony. She said that it was the first time her grandson had ever been recognized for doing something well."

"In this country, we have two million people in prison and seven million on parole. We can change the face of America if we turned them to public service, instead of having them lying in prison bunks."

Maloney, whose mother, Carol Maloney, and sister, Mary McDonald, are members of JOSHUA and St. Bernard Parish in Green Bay, also targets reform in what he calls the "selective nature of justice."

"If you are privileged financially, athletically or other ways, you get treated differently," he said. "If you are an athlete or a Hollywood celebrity, you get treatment. A kid in Milwaukee with marijuana in his pocket goes to jail."

Maloney, a Premontre High School graduate, shared a story from his teen years in Green Bay featuring selective justice. During a beer run at an establishment outside the city, he got into an altercation with a bar patron. His friends planned to

take the money on the bar during the skirmish, but one took it a step further taking the cash register. The police tracked them down in the city.

"The guys I hung around with were not athletes," he said. "The police were taking us into custody when one of them said, 'Hey that's Maloney. They are playing Xavier next week. We better take him home. Take the other kids downtown.' There were seven of us. Five are dead from violence. The system responded to them differently. I came home from college too many times to serve as a pallbearer."

"For our young offenders, we need a good system featuring service instead of incarceration along with a good treatment plan," he added. "We have an opportunity to have people redeem themselves gracefully."

For more information on Maloney's organization, visit [www.communityjusticeassociates.com](http://www.communityjusticeassociates.com). For more information on JOSHUA, visit [www.joshua4justice.org](http://www.joshua4justice.org).