

# Commonwealth Attorney's program



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Being the first at anything often yields many pitfalls before success, if any, is attained. The city of Benham would have been justified in thinking its willingness to serve as the first participant in Commonwealth's Attorney Parker Boggs' community service project (Community Service Leadership Council) would come with a few bumps in the road. After all, when Benham City Police Chief Ryan Shepherd and other Benham leaders signed on for the program, the kinks of this new and far reaching service project were not yet worked out.

But, rather than pitfalls, those behind Benham's participation in the project have seen long-standing success. From the first day, Benham's volunteer (the CSLC volunteer's name has been purposefully left out of this article) has reported for duty and provided the city with a helping hand.

"He has made a difference," Shepherd said. "He has been consistent with his work, he has put forth a good effort and stayed on the job during the time he has volunteered with us."

It is no secret these volunteers choose to take on community service projects as a result of criminal convictions secured against them by the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. The difference between this project and previously accepted justice system penalties is the tangible difference CSLC volunteers can make in the communities they once victimized.

"He is putting work into the community," Benham City Clerk Jessica Smith said. "We are a municipality — we watch and supervise him — but he works side by side with us. We watch as he gives back to this community every day he shows up to cut grass, rake leaves, pick up trash, and perform other much needed tasks."

Boggs is encouraged by Benham's success and thankful for their willingness to try something new, as others might have been hesitant to participate in this program without Benham's proven success.

"We needed people who were dedicated to improving the system and willing to make a path rather than cycle around the well-worn criminal justice system's basic penalty structure," Boggs said.

"The volunteer has completed more than 200 hours of community service since his period of service began," Smith said.

While significant, this represents only a fraction of the community service hours that Boggs hopes to generate in Harlan County through his community service project.

“We are just now fully implementing this program into our office’s pre-trial procedures as an optional condition of probation where probation is mandated by statute,” Boggs said.

Boggs hopes that these first 200 hours of service pave the way for thousands more.

“We are in a position to provide tens of thousands of hours of community service to Harlan County through the justice system and our plea structure,” Boggs said. “I am proud of the progress this program has made in Benham and excited for what we expect to do in the future.”

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