

Project Narrative - anc1D 2008 Small Grants



Title: In 15 words or less, give a title that describes the project's main beneficial result.

Forensic/Legal Counseling For Indigent Arrestees

Narrative: 500 words or less, all on this page. Label paragraphs - A: Group. B: Project. C: Benefits. D: Leverage.

A: Group Here in Washington, DC Metro Science for the People was formed around 1990 by a small group of local people with progressive political views and science backgrounds. We started as a reading and discussion group, with some direct action in our early years,, such as the leafleting of the 1991 annual AAAS meeting over a pro-war editorial in *Science* magazine, infiltrating a 1993 high-tech military-government planning meeting, participation and tabling at peace and social justice movement events. In the last two years, DC Metro SftP activities have included testifying at public hearings, conducting public forums and radio shows on subjects including mandatory HPV vaccinations in the schools, scientific credibility of forensic evidence and wrongful criminal convictions, the erosion of reproductive rights, the proposed DC traffic congestion charge, air pollution and its health effects on DC residents. We intend to continue similar programs in the Mt Pleasant neighborhood as well as educational and participatory activities for creating a green Mt Pleasant.

B: Project Our proposed project is to provide free counseling and assistance for arrested indigent individuals regarding fraudulent forensic tests, in particular invalid drug tests which are used to pressure such individuals into pleading guilty even when they are not guilty. The most commonly used test for marijuana is the so-called Duquenois-Levine (D-L) color chemical test. The typical scenario in Mt Pleasant is that an individual is arrested for suspicion of possession of marijuana, and the substance seized is tested with the D-L test. He or she is then told that the D-L test proves the substance is marijuana, so they should enter a guilty plea for a lighter sentence. In fact, the D-L test proves nothing, and arrested individuals subjected to this experience are denied due process and a right to a fair trial. Moreover, in entering a guilty plea, they can warp their lives and diminish their future gainful employment and access to other societal opportunities. Initially, we would set up a website for information and alternatives to pleading guilty and post notices in the Mt Pleasant neighbor as well as with the D.C. courts, in particular the public defender's office. Eventually, we would like to open a small office on Mt Pleasant street..

C: Benefits The number of individuals, particularly the indigent and minorities, victimized by forensic tests grows daily. The prevention of unnecessary and unlawful convictions is of significant economic benefit to these individuals and their families.

D: Leverage: Members of SftP have already raised foundation grants for related projects and intend to do the same for this project as well as recruit volunteers from the legal community.