



## **NEWS ADVISORY**

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Patti McBride

(206) 684-8710

[Patti.mcbride@seattle.gov](mailto:Patti.mcbride@seattle.gov)

### **Media Invited to Seattle Community Court Theft Awareness Class September 12**

**The media is invited to attend the theft awareness class at Seattle Community Court at 1:00 pm on September 12. Location is the second floor at Seattle Municipal Court. This is a probation session for defendants. No cameras will be allowed to film defendants during class time. Reporters are welcome to take notes during class time, talk to and film facilitators.**

#### **Background**

(Seattle) On July 11, Seattle Municipal Court began offering a theft awareness class for defendants who are charged with theft of merchandise/services in the amount of \$500 or less and who appear in Community Court. The all day class is designed to provide defendants an opportunity to learn about the impacts of theft on the broader community. "The value of the theft awareness class is that it adds another key component that is meant to address the root issue of criminal behavior," states Craig Sims, Criminal Division Chief in the Seattle City Attorney's Office. Defense attorneys believe that the program is another great opportunity and tool that will assist community court clients in reducing their contact with the criminal justice system by teaching them how to make wiser and better choices for themselves, according to Karen Murray, Supervising Attorney from the Associated Counsel For The Accused. Class participation will be an additional requirement to the community service hours normally imposed on Community Court defendants. Classes are held at the court's resource center on the second floor of the Justice Center and facilitated by volunteers. To date, 41 people have completed the class.

Seattle Community Court's new Theft Awareness Program is the culmination of partners working together. Community Court stakeholders, including the Metropolitan Improvement District, the Seattle Police Department, AmeriCorps, and Tricia Lapitan, the Community Court analyst, provided support in the initial stages of development. Stakeholders also play a critical role within the program, serving as guest speakers on the Community Court Panel. During this 45 minute roundtable discussion, defendants hear from a rotating group of business and community leaders who can provide a unique perspective on how theft impacts the community at large.

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