

# Fort St. James looks at community sentencing

By LEAH BLAIN

Cariboo News Service

Young offenders in Fort St. James may soon find themselves fixing, cleaning and handing over their allowance instead of facing a judge.

The mayor and council, in conjunction with the RCMP, are planning to implement a program where young offenders will pay restitution to the victims instead of going through the court system. In this system, which they hope to have in place by the fall of this year, young offenders, in particular first time offenders, will be 'sentenced' by a panel.

Mayor Sandra Harwood says this system will not only relieve the overtaxed court system, it will give the victims a sense of restitution.

"I think it's a great system. The people in the community would have input. There is a screened - heavily screened panel made up of members of the community, an RCMP officer, whoever is investigating, the victim, and a lawyer are followed."

The sentences that the

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panel gives will be geared to helping the victim: if property is damaged, the culprit will fix it; if things are stolen, the thief will repay it.

The idea for this system was inspired by the Village of Sparwood, B.C. Located in the province's south-eastern corner, Sparwood has made a name for itself with this approach to dealing with youth crime. The town has seen a dramatic decrease in crime: in 1995 there were 60 offenses com-

mitted by the youth; so far this year there have been four. And this system could not have a more enthusiastic proponent than Sparwood's mayor, Toto Miller.

"I don't want to say this is Heaven... but we pull together. The system does work. If you have a problem with a kid, you drive him home (to get parents involved)," says Mayor Miller.

The local RCMP are also embracing this system which works around the current judiciary process.

"I think it has a lot of merit. It can work well with certain individuals. It's very feasible to implement," says Corporal Blair Imrie. But he says it would not be effective for repeat offenders or anyone who is "bent on a life of crime."

Liberal MLA Paul Nettleton is also applauding the innovative approach the mayor and council are taking. Mr. Nettleton, who has worked for the past few years as a criminal lawyer, says that he is in favour of community involvement in dealing with young offenders.

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Warning: Frequent violence.  
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### PRIMAL FEAR

Starring: Richard Gere & Laura Linney  
Warning: Frequent very coarse language, scenes of gory violence, occasional nudity and suggestive scenes.

### TRUTH ABOUT CATS AND DOGS

Starring: Ulma Thurman & Janeane Garafalo  
Warning: Occasional suggestive scenes and very coarse language.  
Rated mature

### GREAT WHITE HYPE

Starring: Samuel Jackson & Jeff Goldblum  
Warning: Very coarse and suggestive language, occasional violence. Rated 14 yrs and older

### DIABOLIQUE

Starring: Sharon Stone & Chaz Palminteri  
Warning: Occasional violence, very coarse language and suggestive scenes. Rated 14 yrs and older

### TWISTER

Starring: Helen Hunt & Bill Paxton  
Warning: Occasional very coarse language. Rated mature

### THE PHANTOM

Starring: Billy Zane & Treat Williams

Not Classified

### MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Starring: Tom Cruise & Jon Voigt  
Warning: Some violence.  
Rated mature

### FLIPPER

Starring: Paul Hogan & Elijah Wood

No Warnings

### DRAGONHEART

Starring: Dennis Quaid & David Thewlis  
Warning: Some violence.  
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July 12

July 13 • 14

July 19 • 20 • 21

July 26 • 27 • 28

Aug 3 • 4 • 5

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Warning: Very coarse and suggestive language.

### CABLE GUY

Starring: Jim Carrey & Matthew Broderick

No Warnings

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Starring: Skeet Ulrich & Robin Tunney  
Warning: Occasional violence and coarse language, suggestive scenes.  
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### THE ROCK

Starring: Sean Connery & Nicholas Cage

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