

Employee Spotlight: Troy Cervantes



Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I grew up right here in Kent County! I graduated from Kelloggsville High School in 2011 and further attended Michigan State University, graduating with a degree in Criminal Justice in 2015. I was a member of the Spartan Marching Band and got to participate in the 2014 Rose Bowl Parade/Game. Go Green! I started my career working for the City of Lansing with the 54-A District Court in 2015 as a Criminal/Traffic Clerk. My wife Taylor and I moved back to Grand Rapids in 2018 where I have been working for the County since. My wife is a Veterinarian, so our house is filled with several animals including two cats

(Figment and Rudy), a pug (Sonny), and two geckos (Lieutenant and Pua).

What is your position at Kent County and what individuals do you work with?

I am an Adult Probation Officer at the 63rd District Court. We work with individuals in the community who have been sentenced to a term of probation for a crime they were convicted of. Our responsibility is to assist them in completing the conditions our Judges have ordered as part of their probation sentences. We often work with those who struggle with substance abuse, mental health, and poverty among other battles. We also work with victims of violent and financial crimes assisting them in their protection and reimbursement for the crimes committed against them. Lastly, we work alongside other treatment providers in the area who offer resources such as counseling or drug testing, to ensure we can offer our clients the best resources available in their rehabilitation.

What are two or three things that staff should know about your role?

Our role requires us to be skilled in many different areas: customer service, motivational interviewing, coaching, etc. We work with a very diverse demographic of individuals with very different circumstances to their situations, so in order to do this role well we need to know how to adapt and respond to a variety of needs and how to best motivate the person to address them. Everyone does not respond to the same motivational practice, so it's on us to learn more about them and how to properly motivate them to succeed. We are also very busy! Our caseloads regularly range from 140-170 people at any given time. We conduct...

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pre-sentence interviews, monthly reports, new case intake appointments, administer drug and alcohol tests, and participate in Probation Violation Hearings. Our days can fly by quick!

What is the most rewarding part of your job? What is the most challenging?

For me, it's the ability to come alongside my clients, often at their worst moments, and guide them through a process of self-forgiveness. I work with people who struggle to forgive themselves for whatever may have landed them in my office, and it's incredibly rewarding for me to see them get to a point (after several months of working together) where they can forgive themselves and I get to witness that physical weight lift off of them. Going through the court process and being on probation is often the last place people want to be - it's rewarding to be able to try and give them a positive experience to help them realize, "I am going to be ok." What can be challenging however is the lack of resources available. The unfortunate reality is that some people I work with often need more help than I can provide, or they can afford. Navigating those circumstances can be difficult.

Do you have any interesting stories about your experience working with co-workers or clients?

I have the privilege of running the 63rd District Court Victim Impact Panel. One night a month, I organize speakers from our community who have been in drunk or impaired driving accidents, to share their stories with those on probation here at 63rd and other courts in the county as well. Some of our speakers were drivers themselves, others were victims of crashes or lost loved ones to a drunk or impaired driver. One of our speakers happens to be my cousin, Bruce, who was in an accident many years ago. It has been a joy to be able to do this work with him and to hear from my clients who have been greatly impacted by his story and the obstacles he has had to overcome since.

Is there anything else you want to say/talk about?

The team, the team, the team! I have so much gratitude that I get to work with our team in the 63rd District Court Probation Department. To come in everyday and work alongside so many talented, like-minded people who are committed to giving our community the best they have is inspiring. They make this work so special to do, and I would not be where I am today professionally without them.

