

## HONORS IN ACTION PROJECT PLANNING AND REFLECTION MODEL

*This worksheet is designed to complement an Honors in Action Journal (see page 5 of the 2010/2011 Honors Program Guide) and to prepare the chapter to submit Hallmark Awards entries.*



**The Phi Theta Kappa Experience:  
Honoring Scholars,  
Building Servant Leaders**

### **SAMPLE MODEL ISSUE**

**What issue and/or study question of the current Honors Study Topic did you select?** *Issue 7 Government and Public Policy: How does information affect governments and public policy? Question 10- How is the balance between civil liberties and state interests determined?*

**Why did you select this issue?** *We chose this issue because we wanted to learn more about how laws are governed concerning the release and updating of personal/public information regarding those who have been convicted of violent crimes in our community and state, and how that release of information affects the offender and the community-at-large.*

### **RESEARCH SOURCES**

**What academic publications and experts will you consult? (A minimum of 8 is recommended.) Write a brief description of each source in your journal.**

*Senator Larry Martin- co-writer of State Legislation commonly known as “Jessie’s Law”*

*Detective Eric Whaley-Greenville County Sex Crimes Division*

*James McDonald- Dept. Head Criminal Justice GTC/ Retired GC Crime Lab Director*

*Frank Provanzano, PhD. Psychology instructor GTC/ Criminal Profiler SLED*

*Warren Mowry, Greenville County Solicitor, Retired- Professor of Law, Wofford College*

*Victoria Middleton- Executive Director American Civil Liberties Union-South Carolina National Office (ACLU)*

*Wanda Haynie- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) and psychology professor  
State Law Enforcement Division (SLED)*

*South Carolina Code of Law- Title 23 Chapter 3 Section 7 (SC Code 23-3-7)*

[www.meganslaw.ca.gov](http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov)

[www.sc.gov](http://www.sc.gov)

**What needs did you discover through your research? How did your investigation lead to ideas for an Honors in Action Project?** *We discovered that by taking a specific law at face-value, (namely the Sexual Predators Act of SC) it could be argued that the law is a just and balanced law, and numerous subjects have been prosecuted under this law. However, the reality is, many times, it is just the opposite since the finite details of this law have forced solicitors in South Carolina to be unable to bring criminal charges against individuals. For example, many will agree that laws governing sexual predators are a social must, but sadly, in our quest to stop the most violent of predators, we go over-board in our governing and law-making. There are consequences to publishing Sexual Offender's information for the community-at large to view. Jessie's Law in South Carolina requires that any person who has been convicted of a sex crime in SC must register every year on the South Carolina Sex Offender's Registry. This registry "lumps" all offenders together. There is no differentiation in the way the law is written that would separate a sixteen year-old boy who had an intimate (not necessarily a sexual) relationship with his fourteen year-old girlfriend and was convicted of 'Sexual Conduct with a Minor' and that of a social predator with a predilection to intentionally and continuously sexually violate children.*

*During the initial research process, we decided to develop a survey to post on the college website and through the criminal justice, behavioral and social sciences, and paralegal classes to determine if the "community-at-large" understood the law, how offenders are prosecuted, and how the information on the Sexual Offenders Registry is offered to the public.*

*After gathering data from the surveys and completing research, we decided to hold a public forum on campus that would help to educate those in our college, community and beyond about the perils of taking information at face-value without investigating on their own to find out the core effects of distributing public information. We also wanted to explore the question of whose rights are more important: the individual or "Big Brother," and how the individual may lose said rights, albeit unjustly, after pleading to a lesser charge without realizing they would be required to register as a sexual offender for the remainder of their lives?*

## **THE BASICS**

**Project Title?** *"Sexual Offenders Registry in South Carolina: The Right to Know What You Don't Know"*

**Where and when will the project take place?**

*TRC Auditorium on Barton Campus of Greenville Technical College- October 20, 2010*

**Who is your targeted audience?** *Greenville County citizens and students of Greenville Technical College*

**With whom will you collaborate?** *Behavioral Sciences Department, Rotaract Club, ACLU, Criminal Justice Department, Paralegal Department, Civitan Club, Jaycee's of Greenville Chapter, Greenville County Council, and GTC Student Government Association.*

**Will you form committees? If so, describe them.**

**YES**

*Executive Committee- will oversee other committees during the planning, development and implementation of project- will be headed by chapter officers*

*Legal Research Committee- will research the laws of South Carolina to determine any modifications or updates and give definitions of said laws. Will meet with local law enforcement officers, law-makers and others to arrange for their involvement in event-will be headed by law student/chapter officer*

*Public Relations Committee- will be responsible for working with the college public relations department and meeting with "outside" media sources to advertise the event-will develop fliers for event*

*Set Up/Tear Down of Venue Committee- will be responsible for preparing the venue for event and the overseeing of the cleanup of venue*

**Have appropriate permissions been attained? Y or N (List steps taken in your Honors in Action Journal)**

**YES**

**Describe the leadership roles and actions this project will require.**

*Members will be required to work closely with local and state law enforcement and solicitors to make certain that the laws researched are in effect and currently used by law enforcement and prosecutors. Members will set appointments and interview local legislators to gain an insight to the foundation of the newly enacted law pertaining to sexual offenders. Members will meet with the local representative of the ACLU to ensure that all sides of the argument are equally represented and provide opportunities for advocacy. Members must prepare professional-quality fliers, and work with college media specialists to ensure college policies and procedures are adhered to, and they must also work with local media in an effort to advertise this event to the fullest. During the development stage, members will be required to make sure that all sides of the argument are equally represented, and stand as a hypothetical "Devil's Advocate" among all parties.*

**What specifically will you do to develop the leadership skills and capacity of chapter members and others?**

*Encourage them to go beyond their personal boundaries and step-up to a new challenge.*

*Provide timelines to assist in completion of tasks.*

*Hold committee meetings and general meetings and have each committee-leader give synopsis of completed tasks.*

*Provide a 'safe-haven' for frustrations to be worked through.*

*Allow for mistakes to be made and solutions to be worked out.*

*Will NOT micro-manage!*

**What is the action (Service) component of this project? (Action can also include advocacy.)**

*We will hold a public forum on campus including having representatives from the Greenville County Solicitor's Office- Warren Mowry, SLED, Senator Larry Martin, Dr. Frank Provanzano, Victoria Middleton-ACLU representative, Detective Eric Whaley, Wanda Haynie- NAMI, and James McDonald-Criminal Justice Department Head, to dissect what is available for public consumption on the state's website concerning "sexual predators" and how that information can be misconstrued.*

*We will cover Jessie's Law and how that law came about, the process by which judicial law was determined and how the 'tight-lipped' wording of the law can affect the lives of individuals mandated by law to register, how it affects their potential for an education, job opportunities and their inalienable rights guaranteed by the Constitution of both the United States and the State of South Carolina. Furthermore, we will discuss how the wording in the law can/and has 'tied the hands' of solicitors when it comes to prosecution of offenders. We will discuss how the "rights of many" are considered more important than the "rights of one," even to the point of destroying the very livelihood of individuals whom the constitution has deemed to have an "expectation of privacy." In order to have a comprehensive program, we will include a presentation by the ACLU concerning the rights of victims under the sexual conduct law.*

### **How will the chapter publicize the project?**

*GTC 101- Faculty/Staff Newsletter*

*The Spotlight- Student Newsletter*

*Student Activities bulletin board in Student Center*

*Campus Cruiser Announcements*

*Local Radio spot for 5 days- donated*

*Local Newspaper Media- Becky Mann-GTC*

## **RESOURCES**

**Estimated funds required for the completion of this project: \$300**

### **Itemized Budget:**

*Facilities \$0*

*Venue provided by college free of charge*

*Advertising (printing of fliers) \$100*

*Refreshments \$200*

### **What resources are needed? How will they be acquired?**

*TRC Auditorium-Booked through the Advisor*

*Advertising supplies will be purchased with a grant from GTC Foundation*

*Media has been arranged through Don Massey*

*Culinary Arts department to provide light refreshments*

## **GOALS**

### **List the specific project goals.**

*Educate the public concerning the current sexual conduct law, and how said law may actually produce unintended victims. Motivate the public to take responsibility to question the accuracy and profundity of information made available to them on the state's current Sexual Offenders Registry, and encourage the public to take action by advocating for a "categorized" offenders registry.*

**How did you determine your goals?**

*We realized that although the information in the Sexual Offenders Registry is provided for public viewing, numerous people surveyed were not aware of the totality of the information provided, and the lack of categorization in the information, so we wanted to help educate the public on the perils of taking information at face-value without doing research on their own to determine the value of the information provided. We also wanted to inform citizens that South Carolina is a “mass versus one” state and how that mind-set can lead to perilous repercussions when determining law, such as teenagers having to register as a sexual offender for life after a minor sexual transgression, and hard-core sexual predators being prosecuted under the “lesser component” of the law due to “loop holes” such as age, previous convictions versus plea-bargains, and time frame between charges being rendered.*

**Which Five Star Chapter Development Plan requirements does this project satisfy?**

*Two Star- #7*

*Three Star-#1, #2, #3, and #4*

*Four Star- #3*

**IMPACT (Include participants’ quotes and more detailed outcomes in your Honors in Action Journal.)****What specific quantitative and qualitative outcomes resulted from your work on this project?**

*We had 177 participants during our initial public forum on our college campus, and we were able to present the information to another 75 during the Honors Orientation on campus. The number of participants grew to a total of 375 after presenting to the Carolinas Region of Phi Theta Kappa.*

*There is no guarantee that we were successful in changing the minds of the entire audience, but we were successful in being able to show the co-writer of Jessie’s Law that there are definite “loop holes” that need to be immediately addressed. Our members were thanked for presenting the “whole picture” by a man who has been listed on the registry every year after being convicted when he was fifteen. (The quote is included in our journal of this project.) Members were able to make both personal and professional connections during research and implementation of this project, and the opportunity to visit the State House to meet legislators and share our concerns was a positive influence on many of our members who plan to become lawyers, mental health advocates, and political players in the future!*

**What impact did the Honors in Action Project have on your ...****Chapter:**

*Chapter members networked with civil leaders, college administration, legislators and others in the community and on campus while preparing research and garnering information for this project. Members explored their strengths and weaknesses by completing a timeline, and they also learned how to work creatively through difficulties that arose throughout the duration of this project. Once the project was completed, members felt a new sense of empowerment with the realization that they personally had a hand in educating others through first educating themselves.*

**College:**

*Many of our college professors have asked that we present a 'modified' version of this seminar to their Honors classes and during our annual Constitution Day on campus. Our college administrators had an opportunity to work closely with exceptional students who made a difference in opening the eyes of both the student body and our community because of the thorough research and expert authorities that were presented to speak during this event.*

**Community:**

*Due to a large public response, our Advisor was contacted by the Greenville County Solicitor's office and asked if we would be willing to work with their office to construct a pamphlet for distribution showing the research behind Jessie's Law and the need to work with legislators concerning the amendment to Jessie's Law and the categorization of the Sexual Offender's Registry. Senator Larry Martin invited our officer team to visit the South Carolina State House and be recognized by the General Assembly due to our efforts in helping to educate the citizenry of South Carolina to examine what information is given to them without restraint or explanation.*

**Region and/or Beyond the Region:**

*Our chapter was invited by our Regional Coordinator to present our research and project outcome during the Carolinas Region Honors Institute so that other chapters could see the impact of conducting an Honors in Action activity. Our presentation was recorded so that our chapter could share this information with civic groups in the future. Headquarters Staff Member, Phyllis Duval, was present during our presentation to the region and asked if we would be interested in allowing Headquarters to post our project on the website so that all chapters internationally could see an "up-close-and-personal" example of research, journaling, and the completion of an Honors in Action Planning Model.*

**FUTURE IMPLICATIONS****What is left undone? What opportunities remain for the future?**

*There are many aspects of this project that are open for further exploration and action. We did not reach as many people as we had hoped within our community, but we plan to continue researching and advocating for the reform and exploration of publicly released information without explanation. There is an opportunity to conduct a petition drive in order to solicit our state legislators to modify sexual conduct laws and implement a categorical offender registry. We hope that in the future, the State of South Carolina will be required to amend laws that both tie the hands of solicitors in prosecuting sexual offenders and protect against the possibility of being a detriment to an individual's livelihood veiled in the name of justice. The opportunity for a "Categorized Registry" is possible without costing the state a vast amount of funding and our hope is that our elected leaders will demand that this type of registry be put into effect.*

**What recommendations do you have as a result of the lessons learned?**

*Research, asking hard questions, and demanding comprehensive answers is the key to understanding and coming to terms with so many factors that affect society on a day-to-day basis. “We the People” have a right to know what we do not know!*



Visit [www.ptk.org/honors/guide](http://www.ptk.org/honors/guide) for more information on Honors in Action.