

Teen Court

Summer 2009 • Issue 3

Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

Miami-Dade County Teen Court Hosts 2nd Annual Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Creating Solutions for Change

Miami-Dade County Teen Court (M-DCTC)'s 2nd Annual "YOUTH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE: Creating Solutions for Change Conference" drew in students from all over Miami-Dade County. The purpose of the conference was to address the current rise of violence in local neighborhoods and to advocate against committing petty crimes. The Conference was held at the Hilton Miami Downtown and was a Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) Initiative.

Over 360 Miami-Dade County Public School students attended as part of the ongoing mission for M-DCTC, a peer sanctioning program to address face-to-face the rise of violence in



Conference Registration

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City and County officials with Teen Court staff.



Miami-Dade County Teen Court



Miami-Dade County Teen Court (M-DCTC) is an alternative sanctioning program for first-time youthful offenders who agree to allow their peers to determine sentencing instead of the juvenile justice system. Through youth participation, the program helps decrease juvenile delinquency by interrupting the beginning stages of criminal behavior. Unlike any other diversion program in Miami-Dade County, Teen Court serves a range of youth within its peer sanctioning process such as teens needing a second chance and youth looking for opportunities to serve their community.

How to Qualify for Teen Court

- ☛ Youth must be under the age of 18 at the time of the commission of the offense
- ☛ Must NOT have a prior record of a criminal (misdemeanor or felony) offense
- ☛ The State Attorney's Office or another designated approving agency must first refer the youth for consideration
- ☛ The juvenile must admit his/her guilt
- ☛ The juvenile and parent/guardian must sign a "Waiver of Speedy Trial" form

2nd Annual Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference

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local neighborhoods, in their daily lives, and against each other.

Workshops covering a wide range of topics assisted to educate and prepare students to function effectively in an adult society. The event also informed students about methods that could improve their decision making skills and guide them toward positive behavior, as well as, open the pathway for a possible career in the judicial system.

A variety of speakers addressed the youth including: Keynote Speaker, Mr. Kionne L. McGhee, Esq., Assistant State Attorney; Lysia H. Bowling, Esq., Assistant City Attorney, City of Miami Police Department; and Miami-Dade Police Officer David Bates.

The participants left with a very positive outlook on possible solutions and changes that could be implemented in their communities.



Juan Aspajo conducting "Violence: Creating Solutions for Change" Workshop



Teen Court Staff



Anthony D. Williams, Teen Court Division Director, Kionne McGee with students, and LaVerne Carlile, Teen Court Administrator.



Conference Luncheon

Teen Court in High Schools: South Dade Senior High School

Miami-Dade County Teen Court (M-DCTC) has partnered with Miami-Dade Public Schools in order to bring Teen Court to the school system, where it is called Student Court. One of these high schools that have wholeheartedly embraced the Student Court program is South Dade Senior High School. The school has enrolled a total of 175 students in this program. South Dade Senior High has been the top competitor in the Mock Trial Competitions in the state of Florida. South Dade Senior High competes in District and State Mock Trial competitions. The Mock Trial team has competed throughout the years, with 8 victories out of 11 championships spanning from 1999 to the present. Currently, there are twenty-two students training for this year's competition.

One of the teachers for the Student Court program is Edward J. Callahan. His classes are conducted very professionally from the swearing in of confidentiality to the post trial training. Callahan has an extensive background and understanding in the legal system. Another teacher at Student Court is Tanya M. Hanson, Magnet Academy Lead, who is also in charge of Debate I-IV classes. Teen

Court Student trials will be conducted in the upper level Debate classes. Currently, the high school tries cases on topics such as gang graffiti. Sanctions may include apology letters to all parties involved and community service hours. In order for students to participate in the Student Court Program they must maintain a 2.0 average or better in academics and a B or higher in conduct. All Student Court Classes consist of 9th through 11th grade magnet students.

This is the second year that South Dade Senior High functions as a law magnet school. The school is gaining quick popularity. There are boundaries in order to attend; however, due to demand there is now an out of boundary list of students based on qualifications. Part of the school's program is to place the seniors into summer internship jobs related to legal fields as well as dual enrollment courses. South Dade High is trying to create a real courtroom setup. The school is looking for old court room materials, chairs, furniture, gavels, or other relevant material. If you are able to donate anything, please contact Tanya M. Hanson at (305) 247-4244 x2432.



Mr. Callahan's Teen Court Class

Teen Court Highlighted on ABC Local News Channel - WPLG Channel 10

Our Miami-Dade County Teen Court program was highlighted in a segment called "Teen Court Empowers Students."

Local 10's Sasha Andrade reported on our outstanding volunteers and highlighted Leonard Thompson. A mock trial was shown in action. They also mentioned how these volunteers feel that they are giving back to the community by volunteering with Teen Court.

Teen Court collaborated with St. Thomas University's School of Law, Miami Carol City Senior High School's Law Magnet Program to conduct the mock trial. The story aired on June 16, 2009 during the 6:00 a.m. and noon news segments.



Mock Trial filmed by WPLG News

The Youth Violence Prevention Coalition

In alignment with M-DCTC's outreach efforts, MDEAT's Teen Court Program collaborated with The Youth Violence Prevention Coalition (YVPC), an innovation of the City of Opa-Locka, spearheaded by Commissioner Dorothy Johnson. During the event, Teen Court staff provided an overview of M-DCTC's peer-jury trial process, as well as, presented the following violence prevention mini-workshop sessions: Violence-Creating Solution for Change; Violence in Relationships; and Ethics to approximately 72 youth attendees. Keynote speaker, Kionne McGhee had the students mesmerized. It was a full day of intriguing activities and information for the youth to absorb.

Opa-Locka Commissioner, Dorothy Johnson speaking to the students



Kionne McGhee interacting with the students

volunteer corner

MDEAT and Teen Court Honor Two College Bound Students at Conference

On Monday, May 18th, 2009 Leonard Thompson of Miami Carol City HS and Omar Cancio of Coral Gables HS had several things on their minds as they participated in the second annual Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) and Miami-Dade County Teen Court Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Creating Solutions for Change.

Leonard and Omar, both have dedicated countless hours as youth attorneys defending their peers during Teen Court proceedings. To their surprise they were issued Certificates of Appreciation during the Teen Court Conference on Monday and were anticipating the Silver Knight Awards ceremony the next day. On Tuesday, May 19th, the dreams for two of Miami-Dade's shining High School stars came true they both won Silver Knight Awards in their respective categories, Leonard for Speech and Omar for General Scholarship.

Omar Cancio, Anthony D. Williams, Teen Court Division Director, and Leonard Thompson



Volunteering for Teen Court

Youth Opportunities

Become a youth volunteer; teens can participate as a defense or prosecuting attorney, juror, clerk, and/or a bailiff. It is a beneficial hands-on experience showing the reality of what happens in a courtroom. This volunteer program is magnificent for teens who are interested in careers associated with the judicial system.

Adult Opportunities

Guide our youth by becoming a volunteer and impact their future and our community in a positive manner. Adults can volunteer as court monitors. If proper requirements are met, an adult with a legal background may volunteer as a judge. This rewarding volunteer experience will make a difference in the life of a youth and set an example for them to follow.

For more information on volunteering, please contact LaVerne R. Carlile at 305-622-2592 or email her at LAV@miamidade.gov.

Teen Court is a Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) Initiative.

MDEAT Mission: *To ensure the equitable participation of Blacks in Miami-Dade County's economic growth through advocacy and monitoring of economic conditions and economic development initiatives in Miami-Dade County.*



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Special thanks for photos provided by Joey Walker, Melba C. Gasque and Frank J. Tarrau.

