

Teen Court

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Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

The 6th Annual Miami-Dade County Teen Court Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Inspiring Peaceful Change

Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) hosted the 6th Annual Miami-Dade County Teen Court Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Inspiring Peaceful Change on May 1st, 2013.

More than 300 students from Miami-Dade County Public middle and high schools attended the event. The Honorable Miami-Dade County Commissioner Audrey M. Edmonson, District 3, greeted the students in the morning. The morning speaker, Arielle Derival, a 12th grade student at Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial High School, captivated the teen audience.

Workshops were available for the students to participate in a friendly setting where they could come up with resolutions to issues with two positive actions for changing situations, in a peaceful manner. Workshop topics included: Bullying, Love Relationships, Violence and Media, Profiling, and Violence in Schools and Community.

In the afternoon, students were mesmerized by the special guest speaker, Kelly Charles-Collins, Esquire. She motivated the students and won over the audience as she shared her personal stories.



Arielle Derival and Godfrey Murray



City of Opa-locka Commissioner Dorothy "Dottie" Johnson with Teens at a workshop session



Anthony D. Williams, Teen Court Director, presents Commissioner Audrey M. Edmonson with an award



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

Teen Court Locations

Monday–Thursday, evenings beginning at 5:00 p.m. (except holidays)

- **Richard Gerstein Justice Building**
(1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Monday of every month)
1351 NW 12th Street, Miami, FL - Courtroom 1-5
- **Black Precinct & Courthouse Museum**
(4th Monday of every month)
480 NW 11th Street, Miami, FL 33136
- **South Dade Government Center (Tuesdays)**
10710 SW 211 Street, Miami, FL - Courtroom 2-2
- **North Dade Justice Center (Wednesdays)**
15555 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, FL - 2nd Floor
- **Hialeah City Hall**
(2nd, 3rd and 4th Thursday of every month)
501 Palm Ave., Hialeah, FL (Commission Chamber)

TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials

Jewel Murray

Teen Court Volunteer

North Dade Courthouse

Somerset Academy, 11th grade

My name is Jewel Murray and I am one of the volunteer lawyers at Teen Court's North Dade Judicial Center. Personally, I didn't know what Teen



Court was until my friends told me about it. At first I was just doing it for the community service hours, but now I LOVE IT. It is actually one of

the best things that has happened to me in my life because of the fact that you practice some very good life skills that will help you in your future life. Even if you don't want to be a "lawyer" per se, it helps you with your speech, talking in front of people, and your thinking skills. Teen Court has helped me to be a better person and I know that making THE RIGHT DECISION is very important in my everyday life.

Melissa Montemor

Teen Court Volunteer

South Dade Courthouse

Florida Christian School, 12th Grade

I have been a part of Teen Court for a little over a year now. Teen Court has been such an amazing experience for me. Being able to practice defending these young kids and having the responsibility of putting my cases together in that one hour before trials begin have re-



ally taught me to think on my feet, to be organized, to be creative, and to work efficiently. When I first started Teen Court, I wasn't sure about how

all the procedures worked or how court was, I just knew I liked the whole criminal justice aspect. After being able to learn about all the procedures, I loved it even more and began to look for more to do. I began working at a Law Firm as an intern for a criminal defense attorney and he was so impressed with all I had already learned from Teen Court and with the program itself. All around, Teen Court has been one of the most amazing programs I've been able to be a part of and I would recommend it for anyone considering law in their future.

The Juvenile Justice Forum

Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust's Teen Court Youth Action Committee in partnership with Miami-Dade County's Juvenile Services Department hosted The Juvenile Justice Forum on May, 6th at the Main Library. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Wansley Walters and newly appointed Miami-Dade Police Department Director J.D. Patterson, Jr. spoke on the state of juvenile violence.

"Each community is different when it comes to addressing juvenile crime. We must approach each community individually and engage with the people who best understand the community's needs." Also, Secretary Walters expressed, "It was a pleasure to join Director Patterson at The Juvenile Justice Forum, and to update the audience on the Florida Department of Juvenile Jus-



MDEAT Chair Marc Douthit, Esq. with Juvenile Justice Secretary Wansley Walters and J.D. Patterson

tice initiatives. Most of all, I enjoyed listening to the feedback and want to thank those who took the time to share their thoughts. I appreciate their feedback and I look forward to continuing the dialogue."

The free Forum provided updates on current juvenile justice legislation and its impact on local communities. Teens were able to ask questions and have an open dialogue with Secretary Walters and J.D. Patterson. Both teens and adults were captivated by the discussions. One of the outcomes from the Forum is that professionals will be matched with youth, to learn about their careers and in turn, expose them to various career options.

J.D. Patterson stated, "It was an honor to speak with the youth and hear their concerns from the standpoint of improving juvenile justice and building mutually beneficial relations inside and outside of the organizations."



Juvenile Justice Forum audience filled with teens and adults

teen stat

In a nationally representative survey done in 2009, of those ages 12-17 conducted on landline and cell phones, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project found:

- 4% of cell-owning teens ages 12-17 say they have sent sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images of themselves to someone else via text messaging
- 15% of cell-owning teens ages 12-17 say they have received sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images of someone they know via text messaging on their cell phone.

teen law fact

In Florida, sexting can result in charges of crimes against a minor. Defendants charged must automatically register in the Florida sexual offender registry. If the defendant is a minor, sex offender registry is required if charged as an adult.

Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 75

An act relating to the offense of sexting; providing that a minor commits the offense of sexting if he or she knowingly uses a computer, or any other device capable of electronic data transmission or distribution, to transmit or distribute to another minor any photograph or video of any person which depicts nudity and is harmful to minors; providing that a minor commits the offense of sexting if he or she knowingly possesses a photograph or video of any person that was transmitted or distributed by another minor which depicts nudity and is harmful to minors; providing an exception; providing noncriminal and criminal penalties; providing that the transmission, distribution, or possession of multiple photographs or videos is a single offense if the transmission occurs within a 24-hour period; providing that the act does not prohibit prosecution of a minor for conduct relating to material that includes the depiction of sexual conduct or sexual excitement or for stalking; defining the term "found to have committed"; providing an effective date.

Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 2011.
Approved by the Governor June 21, 2011.
Filed in Office Secretary of State June 21, 2011.

volunteer corner

Teen Court Judge Volunteer, Lourdes Simon

Judge Lourdes Simon has been a dedicated Teen Court Volunteer Judge since 2011. She participates at the South Dade Government Center on a monthly basis.



Judge Lourdes Simon

Judge Simon is a native Floridian; she was born in Miami. Her parents are Cuban migrants that arrived in the early 60's. She graduated in 1986 from Miami Coral Park Senior High and then proceeded to study at Florida International University where she received her Bachelor of Science in Education. Shortly after, she attended Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad School of Law and graduated in 1993.

In 1994, Judge Simon started working as an assistant public defender at the Law Offices of the Public Defender, 11th Judicial Circuit Miami-Dade County. As a Criminal Defense Attorney, she handled cases in County Court and Juvenile Court. Later on which she was promoted to the felony division where she handled all types of felony cases including capital felonies. Judge Simon worked on numerous death penalty cases and had over 60 jury trials of which 8 were first or second degree murder cases. She also was a training attorney and Senior Supervising attorney overseeing approximately 15 attorneys.

Judge Simon was appointed by Governor Charlie Crist to the County Court Bench, 11th Judicial Circuit in 2010. She was first assigned to the criminal division at South Dade Justice Center for approximately 10 months. She also handled Civil Domestic Violence Injunction Hearings, and is currently assigned to Civil Division at the Dade County Courthouse. Also she is a professor at the University of Miami, School of Law teaching Pretrial Litigation Skills.

Her son, Jared Octala, has also volunteered as a youth advocate in the Teen Court program. He has participated as a prosecutor and defense attorney. Judge Simon's hobbies include spending time travelling with her family.

Judge Simon excitedly states, "This is a great program that not only gives young people (volunteers) an opportunity to explore careers in the legal field, but it also gives youthful offenders a second chance to learn from their mistakes and turn their lives around for a brighter future."

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 Dean at 305-622-2592 or email her at LAV@miamidade.gov.

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

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 Melba C. Gasque and Frank J. Tarrau.

