

Teen Court

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Making a Difference in Teen's Lives

Miami-Dade County Teen Court is on the move

Miami-Dade County Teen Court (M-DCTC), a Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust (MMA) initiative, was on the move during the Summer and Fall of 2008. M-DCTC hosted a youth conference, numerous attorney trainings, participated in MMA Speaks Community Media Roundtable with radio stations HOT 105 and WEDR 99 JAMZ, initiated the school-based Referral Program in order to provide additional youth services for the Miami-Dade County Public School System, and experienced an information exchange session with the Sarasota Teen Court Program.

Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference

M-DCTC held its first youth conference at the Hilton Miami Downtown, titled "YOUTH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE" with over two hundred (200) plus individuals in attendance. The conference advanced the program's ongoing mission of allowing youth to address FACE-TO-FACE rising issues of violence along with providing recommended solutions. Conference participants consisted of student volunteers trained in Teen Court concepts, attending Miami Edison Senior High, Miami Carol City Senior High, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Academy. Youth discussed the following four (4)

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Student delivers workshop report with assistance from Marlene Blanco (MMA), Juan Aspajo and Joseph Aleandre (M-DCTC).



Miami-Dade County Teen Court



Miami-Dade County Teen Court (MDCTC) 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

Miami-Dade County Teen Court is on the move

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topics in separate breakout sessions: (1) Violence-Has It Affected You?; (2) How Will Technology-Cell Phones, Text Messaging, You Tube, MySpace, and Video Games Help or Hinder Your Future?; (3) Hip-Hop-Do You Live by the Message in the Music; and (4) Respect or Discipline-When is the right time to give and receive it?

Each group was asked to summarize and report to the conference participants the top 5 findings of their group. As the youth tackled these tough issues, the following summarizes their findings:

1. Respect others by being considerate of their beliefs and values.
2. Society needs to build more schools and less jail houses.
3. Society needs to create/offer more youth programs.
4. Youth need more exposure/interaction with positive role models.
5. Youth need to be more aware of consequences of violence.
6. There should be less overexposure of negative stories about youth from media and increased positive exposure of youth, as some believe that the media is biased.
7. Youth should be accountable for their actions.
8. Youth should exhibit self-control, self-awareness, and maturity.

In addition to participating in workshop sessions, conference attendees



Keynote speaker Bishop Victor T. Curry speaks with conference participants.

were provided strategies geared towards effective decision making from the Keynote Speaker, Bishop Victor T. Curry, Senior Pastor/Teacher of New Birth Baptist Church, NAACP President Miami-Dade Branch, and General Manager of WMBM Gospel AM-1490. Additionally, students learned how to manage conflict from Detective David Bates of Miami-Dade County Police Department Community Affairs Bureau, who provided the morning address. Other distinguished guests included: Reverend Dr. Walter T. Richardson of Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church, representatives from the offices of The Honorable Audrey M. Edmonson, Commissioner, District 3 and The Honorable Manny Diaz, Mayor, City of Miami along with MMAP Education Action Committee Chair Dr. Marzell Smith. The Conference's Mistress of Ceremony was Cindy Campbell, Kingian Nonviolence Facilitator, Florida Martin Luther King Jr. Institute of Nonviolence.



Volunteer Judge and M-DCTC supporter Ira Gordon, Esq. instructs students during mock trial training session.



Dr. Marzell Smith, MMAP Trust Member delivers opening message to participants.

Ira Gordon, Esq., a four year volunteer lawyer and judge for Teen Court commented, "I was very impressed with the organization of the conference as well as with the teens attending. At the workshops, the teens showed a very high level of attention and responsibility. The kids were energized and really into the topics of discussion." He added, "I hope more people find out about the Teen Court Program and the word spreads all over South Florida about this wonderful program."

The birth of the M-DCTC's Teen Speaker's Bureau was one of the student requests during the workshops. The Teen Court Speaker's Bureau will provide a vehicle for Teen Court participants to articulate their perspectives on issues impacting youth in forums that reach the community-at large. Mr. Leonard Thompson, conference attendee, as well as students participating in Miami Carol City's Law Magnet Program, is expected to lead the initiative. 🏛️



Students from Miami Carol City HS Law Magnet Program take oath before youth attorney training session begins.

Court is in Session: Miami visits Sarasota for Information Exchange

Miami-Dade County Teen Court Staff visited Sarasota Teen Court to learn about their operations. M-DCTC Division Director, Anthony D. Williams, Dr. Pamela Green, Psychological Services Coordinator, and LaVerne Carlile, Teen Court Administrator, participated in this information exchange. The training provided by Katie Self, Executive Director, Sarasota Teen Court, on October 8th and 9th gave Miami Dade Teen Court a wealth of information to enhance its programs. Teen Court of Sarasota represents the birth place of Florida's first Teen Court. Since their inception in 1988, there are fifty-five Florida Counties operating Teen Courts.

Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust, an agency of Miami-Dade County, began operating Miami-Dade County Teen Court in 1998. During this on-site training staff was afforded the opportunity to observe Sarasota's peer-jury trial hearings. Dr. Green, the coordinator



(Left to right) Dr. Pamela Green, Katie Self, Executive Director, Sarasota Teen Court, LaVerne Carlile, and Mr. Anthony D. Williams pose at the quilt of t-shirts wall during information exchange.

for Psychological Services for M-DCTC also observed a Peer Counseling Session. As a result of this on-site training, M-DCTC's knowledge base was enhanced, allowing for some components of the Sarasota's court to be integrated into the Miami program. Mr. Anthony D. Williams, Division Director stated, "Katie Self served as an invaluable resource for the further development of the M-DCTC program." 🏛️

Attorney Training

M-DCTC held two attorney trainings this summer. One in collaboration with Miami Dade College - Upward Bound Program located at the Downtown Wolfson Campus and the second was held in collaboration with New Birth Baptist Church Cathedral of Faith International's Youth Ministry. More than 100 youth strengthened their competencies in law terminology, courtroom de-

corum and Teen Court's Peer-Jury process. Participants received training in performing the role of defense and prosecuting attorney, bailiff and clerk. Special tribute was given to Kisha'sha B. Sharp, Esq., of K.B. Sharp, P.A., and Kionne McGhee Esq., Assistant State Attorney of Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office for contributing their expertise in making this event a success. 🏛️



Kionne McGhee, Esq., Assistant State Attorney, Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office explains the legal process to participants.

MMAF Speaks Community Media Roundtable with Hot 105 and WEDR 99 JAMZ

M-DCTC staff, defendant participants, youth and adult volunteers participated in MMAF Speaks Community Media Roundtable Event. Participation in the effort afforded M-DCTC an opportunity to showcase the program, along with its benefits, to those in attendance as well as individuals listening in on the Live - four hour - radio broadcast. During the Community Media Roundtable, Leonard Thompson, Student, Miami Carol City's Law Magnet Program and former attendee at Teen court's "YOUTH SPEAKING OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE CONFERENCE", represented the M-DCTC Speaker's Bureau and shared the recommended workshop actions formulated by the youth for reducing violence in the Miami-Dade community.

Through the efforts of MMAF, and Jerry J. Rushin, Vice President and General Manager, Hot 105 and WEDR 99 JAMZ, the music stopped and the community was provided an opportunity to discuss hot issues that affect the community and resident's quality-of-life for Miami-Dade County residents. 🏛️

School Based Referral Program

Miami-Dade County Teen Court Program has partnered with Miami-Dade Public Schools to institute a School-Based Referral program to assist with reducing the high rate of student suspensions. There is a need in this community to address issues such as the soaring rate of suspensions in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Plus, programs like M-DCTC are a positive solution to providing a second chance for our leaders of the 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 at 305-622-2592 or email her at LAV@miamidade.gov.

Miami Dade County Teen Court is a Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust (MMAP) initiative and MMAP is committed to addressing the socio-economic disparity of Miami-Dade County's Black community by advocating and coordinating initiatives and programs for the benefit of the community-at-large.



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