

Teen Court

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Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

Judge Mathis Speaks To Teen Court/Student Court

The Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) Board introduced a new community organization, The Foundation for Youth and Economic Development, Inc. (FYED). On Friday, December 2nd, FYED had its first event with George Willborn, The Golf and Comedy Jam Stress Relief Weekend! The event included an appearance by Judge Mathis, "TV celebrity appellate court judge", who spoke to Miami Northwestern Sr. High, Booker T. Washington Sr. High, and Miami Edison Middle School Teen Court student volunteers. The event host, comedian, and syndicated radio co-host, George Willborn was also on hand to speak to the students.

MDEAT and FYED presented Judge Mathis with a plaque and Teen Court portfolio in appreciation for Judge Mathis' concern and effort to speak to the Teen Court students. Three of the students were chosen to speak on behalf of their schools and to present to Judge Mathis: Johnny Perez, a senior from Booker T., Washington Sr. High, who according to his teacher Ms. Cynthia Moore, is a leader, outspoken, an independent worker, a consensus builder, quick learner, self motivated and motivates his peers, a self starter, and one who aspires to be a judge; Maurice Bellamy a junior at Mi-

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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



Photo by Joey Walker

From left to right: Maurice Bellamy, George Willborn, Judge Mathis, Johnny Perez, and Jude Raymond.

Judge Mathis Speaks To Teen Court/Student Court

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ami Northwestern Sr. High, who according to his teacher Ms. Rhonda Lewis, is a leader, President of his Criminal Justice Class, spokesperson for the Criminal Justice Program, aspires to be a lawyer, and will be the first in his family to attend college; and, Jude Raymond, an 8th grader at Miami Edison Middle, who according to his

teacher Ms. Brittany Bull, is mature for his young age, eloquent, and always has something insightful to say.

To top off the day, Burnie, the Miami Heat, NBA basketball team's mascot showed up to surprise the students. Miami-Dade County Teen Court Students had a memorable inspiring day!

teen stat

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in 2009, every day eight teens (ages 16 to 19) died from motor vehicle injuries.

TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials

"Teen Court Opened My Eyes"

By Bernarda VanRoy, 11th Grade

Being a volunteer at Teen Court, without a doubt, has been an experience that has not only been educational, but has also equipped me with many valuable tools. Being a Teen Court attorney at South Dade Court has taught me how to think on my feet and speak to others in a confident and convincing manner. It has also given me the skill to be able to refute another person's arguments with great facility and effectiveness. Teen Court has opened my eyes to the harm that occurs in our communities by our youth. This program has provided me with the opportunity to be able to give these teenagers a second chance; another chance to fix their mistakes, better themselves and the community, rather than damaging it. I would recommend everyone to participate and become a part of Teen Court because it is not only beneficial to them, but to the community, and others as well.



Bernarda VanRoy

"Thank you Teen Court"

By Aubrey Staiger, 12th Grade

In the summer of my freshman year at Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School, I witnessed my first Teen Court case presentation. As a Teen Court novice, I observed while two expertly trained high school Teen Court attorneys presented their arguments in front of Cynthia Stafford the honorable Florida Representative. After hearing the excitement of the case, I wanted nothing more



Aubrey Staiger

than to become a trained Teen Court attorney. Following my revelation, I attended Teen Court every Wednesday night at the North Dade Justice Center and participated in the Teen Court Volunteer Youth Attorney Training held at St. Thomas. The training gave me the practice I needed to become a weekly Teen Court lawyer. Since my expert training, I have actively participated in Teen Court throughout my high school career. My experience with the Teen Court program presented me with the opportunity to mentor the struggling youth in my local community. My independent as well as Teen Court based volunteer work has contributed to my Social Science Silver Knight Nomination, of which I am extremely proud of. I am grateful for the growing opportunities presented to me by the Teen Court program.

"Being Better Citizens"

By Aniqua Hendricks, 10th grade

Going to Teen Court every Wednesday night at North Dade Justice Center became a routine for me. I first found out about this volunteer opportunity through a friend of mine. Since I have always been interested in law and criminology fields of work, this was definitely a great option for me. At first I only participated as member of the jury, observing as other volunteers were working the different trials. It was something that I have never seen before.

After attending the training at St. Thomas University's School of Law as part of a Summer 2011 project, I was finally able to be one of the attorneys



Aniqua Hendricks

every Wednesday of each week at North Dade Justice Center since then. I started doing only Opening Arguments, or maybe the Closing Statements at first, until one day that I decided to do the Direct or Cross Examinations as a defense or prosecuting lawyer to wrap up my learning of all the steps and procedures of a court of justice.

Being part of Teen Court has helped me to articulate better and has improved my public speaking skills. Teen Court is a great program that helps teens with aspirations in the legal system as well as being better citizens. Hopefully in time, Teen Court will help me to be a future attorney.

1st Mock Trial Competition at Annual Youth Attorney Training

Miami-Dade County Teen Court Program (M-DCTC) trained a new wave of high school lawyers, bailiffs, clerks, and jurors during its annual summer Youth Volunteer Attorney Training Program and Mock Trial Competition. The three day training was held in August 2011 at St. Thomas University School of Law.

Middle and high school students received training for courtroom trials sanctioned by the program's volunteer training guidelines. These sessions educated and trained youth volunteers in the many facets of the judicial process.



Photo by Joey Walker

(First row) State of Florida Rep. Cynthia Stafford, Esq., District 109; Margaret Foldes, Esq., Federal Public Defender; (second row) Marc Douthit, Esq., MDEAT Vice-Chair Board Member; Raymond McGhee, Esq.; Robert Holland, Esq., MDEAT Chair Board Member; Anthony D. Williams, Teen Court Director; and winners of the 1st Annual Mock Trial Competition were Gina Rossman, Michael Krop H.S.; Michael Fuentes, Belen Jesuit Preparatory H.S.; and Aubrey Staiger, Michael Krop H.S.

A Mock Trial Competition was held on the third-day to showcase what students learned during the two-day training sessions. Pictured above in the photo, are the winners of the 1st Annual Mock Trial Competition along with the judges who highly praised and provided professional coaching to all student attorneys. Judges helped the students sharpen their courtroom etiquette and skills as well as law terminology, and courtroom decorum. Participants received 24 hours of community service credit for attending the classroom training sessions.

The M-DCTC sanctioning program for first-time juvenile misdemeanor offenders was established in 1998, the mission is to advocate and create opportunities for youth to develop into responsible citizens. The mission of the MDEAT Youth Development Division is to change the lives of young people by making a positive impact and providing A Second Chance without a juvenile record by completing sanctions of the M-DCTC program. This diversionary program is designed to provide alternative accountability to the juvenile justice system allowing M-DCTC participants to be tried by a court of their peers. M-DCTC's peer-jury process holds youthful offenders accountable, and participants who successfully complete the program are provided an opportunity to have their record expunged, whereby a record of charge is removed from public viewing, providing youth with A Second Chance.

volunteer corner

Teen Court Youth Volunteer, Luis Salazar

Luis Enrique Salazar is 18 years old and a native of Florida, born on Miami Beach. He has been an excellent Teen Court volunteer for several years.

Luis attended E.W.F. Stirrup Elementary and Ruben Dario Middle School in the Fountainbleau area. Then his family moved to Homestead, and he attended high school at South Dade Senior High School, where he participated in the Law Magnet program.

In his freshman year, he joined the mock trial team, and was one of the three attorneys on the team the year that they won fifth in the State of Florida. At the same time, he played on the high school's Junior Varsity baseball team. In May of that year, he started participating in the Teen Court Program, and continued to volunteer all throughout high school.



Luis Salazar with United States Congressman David Rivera

The summer between his junior and senior year, he was accepted to do an internship with United States Congressman David Rivera (FL-25). Luis ended up accruing 272 volunteer hours that summer, and received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition.

Luis has a desire to be a lawyer and become involved in politics in the future. Luis has decided to attend American University in Washington, D.C., where he will be studying Political Science there in the fall. The Teen Court staff wishes him the best in all his endeavors, and will miss him greatly.

teen law fact

Driving Privileges and School Attendance

The Florida Legislature enacted requirements (Section 322.091, F.S.) that students who attain the age of 14 and accumulate 15 unexcused absences in a period of 90 calendar days be ineligible to receive or maintain driving privileges

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.

