

Miami-Dade County **Teen Court**

SPRING 2015

Providing Youth with a Second Chance

news

Executive director tours Teen Court sites to gauge teens' perspectives on law enforcement

As a result of recent, highly publicized incidents involving police and the community throughout the country, MDEAT Executive Director John Dixon conducted a series of discussions with MDEAT Teen Court youth participants to hear their perspective on law enforcement, authority, and other related issues affecting them.

"Our youth are our community's greatest assets. I was thrilled to have had this opportunity to have an intimate conversation with them about their take on police and people in authority positions," Dixon said. "This was quite an interesting experience. We intend to build

a series of discussions that focus on the youth perspective."

"Teen Court is committed to advocating for the people we serve. These types of dialogues give us the necessary information and input needed to continue the connection between two of our county's most valuable assets: our youth and the law enforcement community," said Training Specialist Zachary Rinkins.

The discussions were held during tours of the four Teen Court program locations in Miami, North Miami Beach, Cutler Bay, and Hialeah.

If you would like to learn more about Teen Court and/or become a



MDEAT Executive Director John Dixon talks with Teen Court participants.

teen or adult volunteer, please see the ad in this newsletter or visit us at www.miamidade.gov/EconomicAdvocacyTrust.

Jail tour is "eye-opening lesson" for Teen Court participants

The clanging of electric metal doors and bars as they close behind you in jail has to be one of the most terrifying moments in anyone's life. Especially when that person's fate is unknown upon taking those final steps inside the cavernous room.

Precisely those scary sounds were heard recently by a group of 15 Teen Court participants from South Dade when they visited the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center and Boot Camp. Were they looking forward to making this visit? Highly doubtful, but such a tour is one of the sanctions imposed on Teen Court first-time offenders, and is a grim foreshadowing of what the future holds for those who do not uphold the law and make wrong choices instead.

The tour began with participants registering in the lobby, followed by realistic presentations from a cor-



rections officer about the jail population, inmates' intake and booking processes, descriptive criminal charges, and levels of custody.

The teens toured the various housing security levels, and then faced the most sobering part of their visit – meeting inmates who talked candidly about the situations that landed them in jail, such as bad decisions, wrong peer groups, drugs, and other negative behaviors

which altered their life forever – and what daily life is like while incarcerated.

"While the teens had some idea of what they would encounter at the jail, coming face-to-face with its ugly reality was a valuable, eye-opening lesson," shared Teen Court Juvenile Services Specialist Shirley Sieger. "It will hopefully remain with and help them make positive life decisions."

Volunteer Corner

Angel Gimenez, Esquire
Gimenez & Carrillo, LLC



Angel Gimenez, Esq.

For the past year, Angel Gimenez has unselfishly contributed to our community by volunteering as a Teen Court judge. His interest in the program was inspired by his daughter, who was a program participant, and whom he accompanied to a number of sessions. As he immersed himself in the proceedings, Gimenez, “found that Teen Court fulfilled a valuable role in making sure teens were given a forum outside the criminal court system to learn, grow, and find the right path.” As a result of his involvement, he was asked to don the judicial robe in Teen Court and has been doing so ever since. Besides helping at-risk kids, he finds mentoring the young teens who participate in this program – including fu-

ture judges, lawyers, bailiffs, and courtroom clerks – a highly rewarding venture. Gimenez would like to see more lawyers in our community join the ranks of Teen Court judges because, “the time commitment is small when compared to the rewards of helping, mentoring, and shaping young lives.”

Gimenez holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Miami, and graduated from Florida State University School of Law. He is a member of the Florida Bar, Bars of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, Bankruptcy Division of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and Cuban-American Bar Association of Miami, Florida. He has practiced law in the areas of personal injury, insurance litigation, wage and hour litigation, and foreclosure defense litigation, among numerous others.

Thank you for being a true “angel” to Teen Court.

Teen stat

The National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), in a December, 2014 report, states that, “This year’s Monitoring the Future Survey of drug use and attitudes among American 8th, 10th, and 12th graders continues to show encouraging news, with decreasing use of alcohol, cigarettes, and misuse of prescription pain relievers; stable rates of marijuana use among teens; decreasing use of inhalants and synthetic drugs, including K2/Spice and Bath

Salts; and a general decline over the last two decades in the use of illicit drugs. However, the survey highlighted growing concerns over the high rate of electronic cigarette use and softening of attitudes around some types of drug use, particularly decreases in perceived harm and disapproval of marijuana use.” To learn more, visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-survey-overview-findings-2014>.

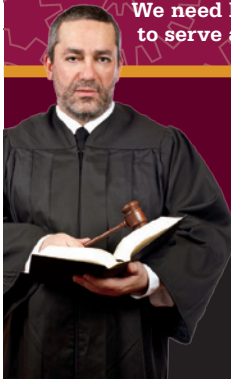
Judges • Lawyers • Legal Professionals Volunteer to Inspire!

Whether it’s two hours a month or two hours a week, Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) is seeking professionals like you to invest a fraction of your time in encouraging local youth to grow into responsible citizens.

We need legal professionals like you to serve as volunteer judges for the

agency’s Miami-Dade County Teen Court. As a volunteer judge, you will mentor young people and help them excel as youth attorneys for first-time juvenile offenders.

Join other South Florida attorneys and judges and volunteer with Teen Court today.



Court hearings begin at 5:30 p.m. and take place at the following locations:

Richard Gerstein Justice Building (Mondays)
 1351 NW 12 ST, Miami, FL
 Courtroom 1-5

South Dade Government Center (Tuesdays)
 10710 SW 211 ST, Miami, FL
 Courtroom 2-2

North Dade Justice Center (Wednesdays)
 15555 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL
 2nd Floor

Hialeah City Hall (2nd, 3rd, and 4th Thursday of every month)
 501 Palm Ave, Hialeah, FL
 Commission Chambers

To learn more about MDEAT or how you can volunteer, visit www.miamidade.gov/EconomicAdvocacyTrust
 T 305.375.5661 • MDEATInfo@miamidade.gov



TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials

Shakeyla Flores Teen Volunteer

As a Teen Court volunteer, I have met an array of students with great potential – both juvenile defendants and volunteers – who work together like a team! Members of the jury must come together to decide a verdict; prosecuting attorneys must compromise on a recommended sanction; the defense attorneys must agree on the procedure in which they go about defending their client; and defendants must adhere to the prescribed sanctions.



Shakeyla Flores

I have acted as prosecuting and defense attorney, court clerk, bailiff, and jury member. I am proud to have experienced and enjoyed each volunteer task – whether introducing the case, examining the defendant through questioning, or announcing the closing argument.

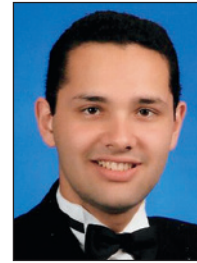
As a result of Teen Court and re-

ceiving feedback from judges and staff, I have upheld values of confidentiality and professionalism, and contributed to the rehabilitation of youths. The sentence hearings allow me to gain knowledge and experience of the judicial process, while also providing me with the opportunity to apply my own thinking and problem-solving skills to give youths a second chance. Being in such a professional setting truly fascinates me and I hope to pursue a career as an attorney.

Teen Court has definitely changed my perspective on life and taught me a great deal! Most important, I am grateful and proud to be able to call myself a Posse Scholar as well as to be attending Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in the fall – a prestigious institution that seeks to develop future, well-rounded leaders. I will be sharing this wonderful experience with a posse of nine other talented and ambitious scholars who will be striving for success with me. Teen Court staff has absolutely provided me with unconditional support and served as a beacon of guidance throughout this entire process! My appreciation is endless.

Bryan Calvo Teen Volunteer

I have spent the last four years volunteering for MDEAT's Teen Court program. All I can say is that it has changed my life. I quickly fell



Bryan Calvo

in love with Teen Court because I knew I was making a direct impact in the lives of the participants. I have served as a defense and prosecuting attorney at Hialeah City Hall and Richard Gerstein courts.

Teen Court has shaped me as an individual and given me the skills that led me to success in high school. I have built strong public speaking confidence, developed the ability to think critically and creatively, and met great people who to this day form a part of who I am.

Teen Court afforded me the opportunity to participate in the summer YIPI initiative – a once-in-a-lifetime experience – which allowed me to intern with the Miami-Dade County Chamber of Commerce. This program serves as an inspiration and motivation for my life goal which is to dedicate myself to helping others.

Now at the end of my senior year, I begin a new chapter which will take me to Harvard University in Boston. Without my time in Teen Court I could not have achieved such a lofty goal. I hope to major in economics and government so that in the future I can return to my community and continue some of the same ideals that Teen Court advocates. Thank you for everything Teen Court. This is not a goodbye, just a see you later.

Frank: You are greatly missed!

MDEAT is sad to announce the passing of Frank Tarrau, who retired last year from the agency after 25 years of service within the Florida Retirement System and more than 15 years with Teen Court. During his MDEAT tenure, Frank served as director of Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust's (MMAP) Martin Luther King Leadership Academy, an alternative program affiliated with the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. He completed his service as Training

Specialist for the agency's Miami-Dade County Teen Court program.

"Frank left an indelible mark on all the people he encountered," MDEAT Executive Director John Dixon said. "His enthusiasm and contributions to Teen Court were unparalleled. He will definitely be missed."

Tarrau earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in developmental counseling from the former Biscayne College (now St. Thomas University). He leaves behind his son, Michael; grandson,



Frank Tarrau with Teen Court participants

Jayden; and a host of friends, family, and former colleagues to cherish his memory.

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

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
- **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)

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 wonderful 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 law fact



A curfew is a law enacted by a local or state government that restricts certain people from being in public places at specified times of the day. Many cities and towns have a curfew law in place to prevent teenagers from being out at certain times, typically spanning the late hours of the night or school hours during the day. Any teenager caught out after curfew can face a fine or even jail time, depending upon the specific laws of the town... Every curfew law is different as is every penalty associated with breaking this law. Some areas simply issue a warning, while others may escort the curfew breaker home. Parents may face charges if their child is caught out past curfew, and in some cases a fine or even jail time may be enforced.

Source: http://www.ehow.com/list_7722391_curfew-laws-teenagers.html

Teen Court news

Miami-Dade County Teen Court

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Main Office: 305-375-5661
North Office: 305-622-2592
<http://www.miamidade.gov/EconomicAdvocacyTrust>

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.*



MDEAT

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Providing Youth with a Second Chance