

Teen Court

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Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

The 5th Annual Miami-Dade County Teen Court Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Developing Change

Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) hosted the 5th Annual Miami-Dade County Teen Court Youth Speaking Out Against Violence Conference: Developing Change on Thursday, May 3, 2012 at the Doubletree Hotel, 711 N.W. 72nd Avenue, Miami, Florida 33126. The annual conference is part of the ongoing advocacy mission of Teen Court.

The honorable Audrey M. Edmonson, Commissioner District 3, addressed the students in the morning to kick-off the conference where Miami-Dade County Teen Court presented her with an award for her support. Teen Court's keynote conference speaker, Veraunda I. Jackson, Esquire and author of "Behind The Scenes: A Teenager's Guide to Starring in a Successful Life", amazed the audience. Her motivational skills mesmerized the students and adults.

Speakers and workshops sent a message across to address issues surrounding violence and the future of our youth. Recommended actions were recorded from the youth participants that expressed their concerns. Workshops included the following topics: profiling, bullying, gun violence, and violence in dating/relationships.



Commissioner Audrey M. Edmonson and Anthony D. Williams, MDEAT Youth Division Director



Students with Veraunda I. Jackson



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 5:30 p.m. (except holidays)

- Richard Gerstein Justice Building (Mondays)
1351 NW 12th Street, Miami, FL - 1st Floor
- South Dade Government Center (Tuesdays)
10710 SW 211 Street, Miami, FL - 2nd Floor
- 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 Avenue, Hialeah, FL
(Commission Chamber)

TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials

"What Miami-Dade County Teen Court has done for me."

Editorial by Danielle Robinson
12th Grade, South Dade Sr HS

I started attending Teen Court at the beginning of my freshman year in high school. It was my first year attending school in Florida, moreover the United States of America. I had no idea how to fit in with American society, much less how to fit into school in America. The idea of conducting community service as a requirement for graduation was foreign to me, it was the moment that I realized having A's and B's on my report card just wasn't enough to do well. I am from Jamaica.

Miami-Dade County Teen Court was the first community service project I ever took part in, and by far the most significant. After hearing about it from my Legal Studies teacher, Ms. Hanson, my ambition to become an attorney in the future prevented me from passing up the opportunity to

attend as all of my classmates did. The promise of being a youth attorney in a real court with real defendants who committed real crimes was like finding gold. Back in the 9th grade, I believed that I had finally achieved my dream career; however after several trials, I came to realize that I was only half way there. I came to realize that Teen Court was a gateway that led to a brighter future not just for me, but also for the defendants who chose to have their crimes heard at this program.

For youth who break the law for the first time, many come to realize at Teen Court, that it would be their last time. Instead of gaining a record that could jeopardize their entire future; those youth are able to see that Teen Court gives them a second chance- something valuable that others cannot get, and the U.S. court system will not give. Their mistake would be sealed from their record so long as they plead guilty, accept responsibility for their actions, and perform the Teen Court's sanctions. They hear loud and clear that while they enjoy this second chance, if they ever choose to push their luck and break the law again, they will have not one, but two crimes on their of-

ficial criminal record. Though some of these children do decide to disregard their fortunate chance at Teen Court, most of them do not make that mistake. Most learn and realize the seriousness of their wrong decision and choose the better path. Most are good students who go to school, value their education and go on to live good lives. Some of them even come back to Teen Court to take part in the judicial process.

For me, being able to attend Teen Court not only helped me to experience what it feels like to be an attorney, but also what it feels like to help my peers better their lives.

Teen Court benefits the community because it benefits the youth that live within our community. Because young people are experiencing many changes in their lives, they sometimes make mistakes, and I have

seen Teen Court help many resolve those mistakes. I, just like many others, am grateful for my opportunity to have attended, and I am proud to make Miami-Dade County Teen Court my official community service project, as a graduating senior in high school, and as a Miami Herald Silver Knight nominee.



Miami-Dade County Teen Court's Mock Trial on Profiling

Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT) hosted the Miami-Dade County Teen Court Mock Trial on Profiling, Tuesday, June 5, 2012 at the Betty T. Ferguson Recreation Complex, 3000 NW 199 Street, Miami Gardens, Florida 33056.

A reenactment of a crime took place, followed by a Teen Mock Trial on Profiling. The evenings' presiding judge was the Honorable Judge Orlando A. Prescott. Students and citizens came out to voice their views on profiling and on local Miami Gardens crime issues. After the reenactment of the crime, the trial began, and afterwards the audience was able to express their views and outcome on the profiling trial.



Students from American, Dr. Michael Krop, Miami Carol City, and Miami Norland High Schools, and Lake Stevens, Miami Carol City, Miami Norland, and Parkway Middle Schools participated in the evening's events. In addition, federal, state, and local officials attended, and took part in the activities. Ed Haynes, Chief of Security and Director of Special Operations contributed to the event by representing Congresswoman Frederica Wilson.



teen law fact

Teen Runaway Laws: Sheltering and Aiding

In Florida, it is unlawful to shelter or aid anyone who is under the age of 18 years old. Specifically, Florida state law, as defined by the Becca Bill, declares that it is against the law for any adult "other than the child's parent or guardian to shelter a runaway for more than 24 hours without permission of the child's parent or a law enforcement officer." Additionally, aiding can also include helping a runaway teen obtain shelter, even if it is in a hotel or motel.

2nd Annual Mock Trial Competition at The Annual Youth Attorney Training

Miami-Dade County Teen Court Program (M-DCTC) trained a new wave of volunteer lawyers, bailiffs, clerks, and jurors during its annual summer Youth Volunteer Attorney Training Program and 2nd Annual Mock Trial Competition. The three day training was held on Monday, July 30th, Tuesday, July 31st, and Wednesday, August 1, 2012 from 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at St. Thomas University School of Law, 16401 NW 37 Avenue, Moot Courtroom. Students were greeted the first day by Douglas E. Ray, St. Thomas University School of Law Dean and Professor of Law.



Distinguished volunteer judges pictured above included: Kelly Charles-Collins, Stacy Cleveland, and Ray McGee. Teen Court's dedicated volunteer attorney coaches included: Olanike Adebayo, Todd Bass, Miesha Darrough, Marcus Griggs, Sherria Williams, and Jennie Wingad. As well as, Florida State Representative, Cynthia A. Stafford who participated as one of the volunteer judges for the first half of the competition. Also, pictured above in the photo, are the final two teams that competed in the 2nd Annual Mock Trial Competition along with the judges who highly praised and provided professional coaching to all student attorneys.

The 2nd Annual Mock Trial Competition was held on the third-day to showcase what the students learned during the two-day training sessions. The Judges helped the students sharpen their courtroom techniques as well as law terminology, and courtroom decorum.

volunteer corner

Teen Court Judge Volunteer, Judge Tanya Brinkley

Judge Tanya Brinkley has been active with Miami-Dade County Teen Court since 2005. She is a dedicated volunteer and is very valued by the teens and the Teen Court staff. She was awarded the 2010 Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr. Bar Association Pro Bono Award and the 2009 Ray Pearson Guardian Ad Litem Pro Bono Award by the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Family Division Judges for her representation of children in contested family cases.



Judge Tanya Brinkley

Judge Brinkley is originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she obtained her Bachelors of Business Administration in Finance in 1991. In the summer of 1992, she became a Council on Legal Education (CLEO) fellow at Georgetown University School of Law.

Shortly thereafter, in the fall of 1992, Judge Brinkley joined the Miami-Dade community and entered the University of Miami School of Law, where she earned her J.D. While in law school, she served as a Certified Legal Intern at the Miami-Dade Office of the Public Defender, a Judicial Intern with United States Southern District of Florida Judge Donald Graham, and a member of the 1993 NACDL Mock Trial Team.

Following graduation in 1995, Judge Brinkley became a sole practitioner. In 2000, she formed Brinkley & Henrys, P.A. and currently practices in the areas of family and marital law, as well as criminal defense.

Judge Brinkley was just elected this year in August as a Miami-Dade County Court Judge. She will commence her judicial duties in January, 2013. Judge Brinkley is assigned to the criminal division at South Dade Justice Center, where she will preside over misdemeanor crimes, criminal traffic, and domestic violence cases.

We wish her well with her new appointment.

teen stat

Teen Driver Deaths Up – Stats Point to Talking and Texting. Researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M have identified the main reason for increasing numbers of fatal crashes in the USA by teen drivers at night: cell phone talking and texting. In Florida, one in every six crashes is caused by a distracted driver.

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) 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.*



Miami-Dade County Teen Court

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

