

Teen Court

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Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

Student Court Initiative in Miami-Dade County Public Schools

M-DCTC has partnered with Miami-Dade Public Schools in order to bring Teen Court to the school system. Students are now learning how the justice system works, as well as, being inspired to look into a future career in law. Trainings are being conducted with various Miami-Dade County Schools, such as Miami Jackson Senior High School, Carol City Senior High School, North Miami Senior High School, Miami Edison Senior High School, and



Carol City Senior High School

South Dade Senior High School, just to mention a few. These trainings orient and train the students on how to perform the role of bailiffs, clerks, prosecuting and defense attorneys in order to volunteer their services to the Student Court process. Students learn law terminology and court room decorum. Students practice with mock trial presentations to prepare them for the real thing at their schools. Offenses that are occurring at the high schools will and are being trialed by these trained Student Court volunteers. In addition to acclimating students to Teen Court's peer-jury trial process; this School-Based Referral Restorative Justice model fosters repair and restoration of relationships at school, as well as, aiming to reduce suspensions and expulsions and lowering the drop-out rates.



North Miami Senior High School



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

volunteer corner

Highlighted Judge - Ira Gordon, Esq.

Ira Gordon, a local native of Miami has been a dedicated Miami-Dade County Teen Court (M-DCTC) volunteer judge for more than 4 years. Attorney Gordon received an Honors Bachelor of Science Degree from University of Florida in Mass Communications and Political Science. Ira has practiced law since 1980 in various arenas and received a Juris Doctorate Degree from Nova University Law Center. Prior to attending law school, he worked several years in broadcast television network news as a news anchor and investigative reporter. Attorney Gordon is currently employed with Delsy Perez, P.A. and his areas of focus are state and federal litigation, entertainment law, franchise law, federal bankruptcy, and all aspects of commercial law.

Ira Gordon cares about our community's young people and is active in numerous youth-oriented program efforts and is devoted to the success of M-DCTC. He currently serves as a volunteer judge in Teen Court's Tuesday night court hearings held at the South Dade Government Center. In addition to serving on Tuesday evenings, he willingly lends his support wherever, and whenever needed. He has also been instrumental in presiding over hearings in past Teen Court Volunteer Youth Attorney Trainings.

Ira states, "I have always strived to make time for the Teen Court when called on as I see the hard work, devotion and dedication of the Teen Court student volunteers, defendants and their parents and the enlightening



experience they all share when they partake in Teen Court activities. I encourage other professionals to devote their voluntary hours to do the same to ensure that TC prospers and continues to thrive in future years." Ira you are an asset to our community and to the Teen Court program!

Shining Student Volunteer - Jessica Moscoso

Jessica Moscoso stands out in Teen Court; she is a nineteen-year-old Cuban American young lady who is very focused on her life path. She has been in a four year Law magnet program at Coral Reef Senior High School and has been a dedicated volunteer for the South Teen Court Program. Jessica has been accepted at numerous colleges such as Univer-



sity of Miami; University of Florida; George Washington University, NYU, Columbia and Duke, just to touch on a few. Jessica will soon be making her decision on which college to attend and it will be her choice out of a great selection. She has a tremendous passion for law and her parents are extremely proud of her.

Jessica always encourages her younger brother who is a freshman to continue studying and pursue his dreams at all times. Also, she has gotten her whole family involved in volunteering in our community. Jessica mentioned that the Teen Court program has allowed her to explore all her possibilities for the future and where she is going. Through Teen Court she has been able to get to know many judges who have served as mentors, as well as role models.

Jessica states, "Teen Court program works to help both participants and volunteers focus on getting their lives together." Jessica has observed that parents are very appreciative of the Teen Court program assisting their kids in getting a second chance. According to her, most of the parents work and have other kids, but still participate with their kids that are going through the Teen Court system. Jessica exuberantly states, "I believe in the program! Sometimes kids do stupid stuff and are at the wrong place at the wrong time and this is a good opportunity for them to turn their lives around. These are life

lessons and Teen Court makes you look back and stop before committing a bigger offense in the future."

Jessica Moscoso is a dedicated volunteer and we wish her much success in all her future endeavors.

SAVE THE DATE!

TEEN COURT SUMMER ATTORNEY TRAINING

Stay tuned as Miami-Dade County Teen Court gears up for its' upcoming Volunteer Youth Attorney Trainings. As was the case last summer, Teen Court plans to hold a number of trainings throughout Miami-Dade's Tri-County community during the summer months. Last summer's attorney trainings were sensational and we look forward to the summer of 2009's sessions being more exciting and enriching. Additional information will be coming soon. Don't miss out, stay tuned until later...

Middle School Visits Teen Court

Miami-Dade County Teen Court was pleased to have a group of 15 students from Country Club Middle School visit the Monday night court session on April 20, 2009. Law Teacher, Mrs. Houston's group was given an opportunity to serve as a jury panel on one of the two cases heard that night. The group of 8th graders was excited to participate



in the process of imparting justice to their fellow teenagers by asking relevant and insightful questions to the defendant during the court hearing. It is the second time this group of 8th graders has come all the way from North West Miami-Dade County to Downtown Miami to observe and serve in a Teen Court hearing.



"Scared Straight"

M-DCTC in collaboration with Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation put together a tour of the Boot Camp program. During the 2nd Quarter of Fiscal Year 2009, forty-seven Teen Court participants were able to attend the Boot Camp Tour held at the Corrections' Boot Camp facility. The Boot Camp Tour serves as a crime prevention and intervention tool. This provides Teen Court participants with an understanding of the Boot Camp Program and the consequences of engaging in negative actions.



MDC's Criminal Justice

On February 12th, 2009, M-DCTC engaged in a community outreach effort by collaborating with Professor Nerissa James of Miami-Dade College's (MDC) North Campus Criminal Justice Program, in hosting a court hearing on campus. This joint event afforded thirty-one MDC students an opportunity to become familiar with the Teen Court peer-jury trial process. An additional benefit was that Teen Court participants were equally fascinated with this MDC program. M-DCTC looks forward to working again with MDC's Criminal Justice Program, in keeping with the concept of taking Teen Court on the road.

Victim Awareness Panel Workshop

M-DCTC staff conducted Victim's Awareness Panel (VAP) Workshop, an interactive workshop that sparked dialogue between participants, parents and/or guardians. During the 2nd Quarter of Fiscal Year 2009, seventy-seven individuals comprised of both program participants and

their parents discussed the value of forgiveness, restoration, and repair of lost trust as well as how various crimes committed impact the family and community. VAP is a therapeutic workshop, and represents one of several provided through Teen Courts Workshop and Counseling

component. Other workshops and counseling forums, helping to foster positive changes in youth include the following: Anger Management; Ethics; Jail/Boot Camp Tours; Retail Theft Prevention; Law-Related Education; Substance Abuse Prevention; Peer Circle; and Conflict Resolution.

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.



Miami-Dade County Teen Court

19 West Flagler Street, Suite M-106

Miami, FL 33130

Main Office: 305-372-7600

North Office: 305-622-2592

www.miamidade.gov/mmap/program-criminal.asp

STAFF

John E. Dixon Jr., MMAP Interim Executive Director

Anthony D. Williams, Division Director

LaVerne Carlile, Teen Court Administrator

Dr. Pamela Green, Psychological Services Coordinator

Joseph Aleandre, Juvenile Services Specialist

Juan Aspajo, Juvenile Services Specialist

Marisela Portela, Juvenile Services Specialist

Levon Inniss, Administrative Officer

Frank J. Tarrau, Training Specialist

Melba C. Gasque, Marketing Administrator

Araceli Acosta, Office Support Specialist

Petra, Granados, Office Support Specialist

Shanekqua Griffin, Office Support Specialist

Article Contributions

Melba C. Gasque, Marketing Administrator

Dr. Pamela Green, Psychological Services Coordinator

Joey Walker, Public Information Officer

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

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