

# Teen Court

Making a Difference in Teens' Lives

## Teen Court's Newest Program and Staff Person

Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust (MDEAT)'s Teen Court program recently launched a youth entrepreneurship workshop series to help address the high unemployment rate among teens in the County's Target Urban Areas (TUAs). TUAs are 15 County-designated neighborhoods and two commercial corridors that serve as economic development priority. County economic research revealed that socio-economic conditions in the TUAs lag far behind the rest-of-the-County. This new economic initiative aims help reverse that trend by exposing participants to business principles, young and experienced entrepreneurs, and encourage the creation of micro-businesses.

MDEAT is hopeful that message of empowerment and business resonates with its youth volunteers. The agency created the youth entrepreneurship initiative to give Teen Court participants an optional track on entrepreneurship. The workshop series is an extension of that effort.

The youth entrepreneurship workshop series is an on-going seminar that occurs during the second week of each month before Teen Court sessions. The four-part workshop series cover business essentials, business plan creation, business economics, and marketing/salesmanship skills. Various workshops will feature local entrepreneurs and give participants access to helpful resources.

Teen Court is pleased to announce that this program will be overseen by Zachary Rinkins. Rinkins, a former agency intern, now serves as manager of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

A Miami native, Zach is thrilled to serve the community and work for the agency. A proud Miami Central High School graduate, he started his professional career as 15-year-old cast member of "By Kids for Kids", on WPLG Local 10 television. He formally served as a spokesman, university administrator, and is an Associated Press award-winning multimedia journalist.



Zachary Rinkins

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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

#### Teen Court Locations

Monday–Thursday, evenings beginning at 5:30 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
- **Black Precinct & Courthouse Museum**  
(4th Monday of every month)  
480 NW 11th Street, Miami, FL 33136
- **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)

# TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials

## Doris Rodriguez

*Law Enforcement Officers  
Memorial's High School  
10th grade*

Just one year ago, I started off as this shy girl, who knew she had something to say, but got butterflies in her stomach the moment she spoke. Teen Court has provided an amazing opportunity not only to gain confidence in myself, but to realize my full potential. Standing in a courtroom and being able to deliver passionate statements as a volunteer defense or prosecution lawyer to a crowd full of people is exhilarating. I have learned that my passion for law is more than just a phase and this is something I want to do for the rest of my life. This program has opened up new doors and showed me a new side of the community I've lived in for so long. My age has not been a detriment, and the fact that I am able to pioneer change has been drilled into my skull. Ranging from various summits, community workshops or even remembrances of historical events,



Doris Rodriguez

gave the opportunity to practice the necessary skills as bailiff, clerk, defense attorney and prosecutor counsel, dealing with real cases in a real courtroom. It also helped me open my mind to think in many ways instead of just one. Even though in my future I would like to become a psychologist, Teen Court still aids me on how to read people by their body language and characteristics, their social problems as well as being immersed in the interesting and incredible field of law.

the list is endless. Becoming a part of Teen Court has been the best decision of my high school years.

## Mara Mathieu

*Law Enforcement Officers  
Memorial's High School  
10th grade*

Before joining Teen Court, I could only imagine how it would feel to do what happens in courts like in TV's Law and Order. Now being a volunteer at Teen Court has broadened my skills to speak to a crowd and programs that pertain to law. It



Mara Mathieu

gave the opportunity to practice the necessary skills as bailiff, clerk, defense attorney and prosecutor counsel, dealing with real cases in a real courtroom. It also helped me open my mind to think in many ways instead of just one. Even though in my future I would like to become a psychologist, Teen Court still aids me on how to read people by their body language and characteristics, their social problems as well as being immersed in the interesting and incredible field of law.

## Shemar Lewis

*Miami Central High School  
10th-grade*

I am currently a Teen Court Attorney at the North Dade Justice Center court and I would like to share the positive experience that I have encountered and how my life was impacted.

This program has helped me tremendously to develop into the young man that I am today. Teen Court has taught me proper courtroom techniques that I cannot get anywhere else at my age. It has inspired me to pursue a law degree in hopes of becoming a Supreme Court Judge. Clearly, this is an excellent program for teens that would like to learn about the law and the justice system.

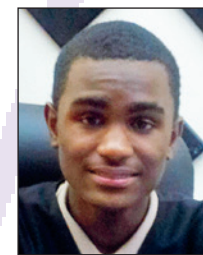
Teen Court also gave me the opportunity to experience hands on training on Court procedures, the role of judges, and attorneys as it ap-

## teen stat

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) includes prevalence data for children ages 8 to 15. These data show that approximately 13 percent of children ages 8 to 15 had a diagnosable mental disorder within the previous year. The most common disorder among this age group is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which affects 8.5 percent of this population. This is followed by mood disorders broadly at 3.7 percent, and major depressive disorder specifically at 2.7 percent.

plies to the court system. Teen Court also teaches teens the proper attire to wear to court and how to address the court when appearing before a judge. In addition, judges and lawyers give great advice to begin law careers and provide constructive criticism on your performance in Teen Court which encourages, mentors, and challenges teenagers to live up to their fullest potential.

Finally, Teen Court has a very positive influence on my life. Being a Teen Court Attorney has made me realize that I want to pursue a



Shemar Lewis

career in law. The Justice System is not perfect, but when I become an attorney I can influence, change and help people getting a fair trial and ensure that they have proper representation in Court. I became a Christian at the early age of six (6) and I am still active in my church at the 93rd Street Community Baptist Church where the Rev. Dr. Carl Johnson is my pastor, and I intend to continue to follow the teachings of the Bible while I pursue my dreams of becoming an attorney seeking justice and truth.

## teen law fact

Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights law, prohibits programs that receive federal funds from discriminating against children with disabilities and, under certain circumstances, requires school districts to make accommodations for the ADHD student.

## New Program and Staff Member

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Both he and his work were featured in various print and broadcast media including BlackEnterprise.com, Ebony Magazine, and the HuffingtonPost.com, among others.

Rinkins earned a Bachelor of Science in Broadcast Journalism from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. He is also a recipient of Knight-Ridder's Silver Knight award and the Doublemint A.C.E. Community Service Award. In 2001, then-County Mayor Alex Penelas awarded him a commendation for community service. He is a member of the South Florida chapter of the National Black Public Relations Society and the Professional Speakers Network. He enjoys swimming, reading, and engaging conversations.

Teen Court welcomes and is very excited to have Zachary Rinkins on the team.

## Student Court Returns with A New Student Court Specialist

Miami-Dade County Teen Court is proud to announce our new Teen Court/Student Court Specialist Ralph McCloud. Mr. McCloud is responsible for the administration of Student Court, an Alternative to Suspensions Program collaborative; implemented in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools.



Ralph McCloud

Mr. McCloud brings to Teen Court a twenty-five year history of leadership program development, with a background of strategic planning and implementation. As a public administrator, he has served community based organizations, federal, state and local government.

From 2004-2009, he managed United States Department of Health and Human Services funded programs in the areas of Pregnancy Prevention, Community Based Abstinence Awareness Education and Mentoring Children of Prisoners

A New York native and long-time Miami resident, McCloud earned his bachelor's degree in Interpersonal and Group Communications at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill; and a Finance degree at the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Over the past decade McCloud has assisted more than 400,000 constituents in six counties, while serving as Senior Legislative Assistant for former Florida State Senator Larcenia J. Bullard- District 39. Teen Court is excited to have Ralph onboard especially since he possesses the skills that are imperative to building relationships and community partnership.

## volunteer corner

### Teen Court Judge Volunteer, Patricia Henrys

Patricia Henrys, Esq. has volunteered with Teen Court since February 2010. She is the founding partner of The Henrys Firm, P.A., formerly Brinkley & Henrys, P.A., where she specializes in the areas of family and marital law. She has extensive experience in complex litigation matters involving divorce, paternity, and modification proceedings, and is also a certified family law mediator.

Ms. Henrys relocated to Miami from Connecticut as a teenager, at which time she began to celebrate her diverse family background. She is the product of immigrant parents--a Haitian father and a Colombian mother--with a particularly unique appreciation for and understanding of the members of this community as a result. Ms. Henrys attended Miami Palmetto Senior High School and New York University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, with a minor in History. She returned to South Florida to attend law school at Nova Southeastern University. After earning her juris doctorate in 1996, Ms. Henrys began her legal career as an associate attorney at the Yanowitch Law Center practicing primarily in the areas of civil and commercial litigation



Patricia Henrys, Esq.

In 2010, Ms. Henrys was appointed by the Eleventh Judicial Circuit to serve as a Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer in the Miami-Dade County Civil Traffic Division, one of the busiest divisions in the State. As a Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer, Ms. Henrys presides over hundreds of cases each week.

Ms. Henrys also enjoys her affiliation with various bar associations, provides countless hours of pro bono legal services through various organizations, and enjoys serving the community, particularly as a Volunteer Judge for the Teen Court program. Ms. Henrys states, "Teen Court encourages positive youth development and strengthens our community. The personal rewards from working with young people and those who make the program successful are high. They are the reason for my commitment to the program."

## 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](mailto:LAV@miamidade.gov).**

*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.*

# Teen Court

NEWS

### Miami-Dade County Teen Court

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EconomicAdvocacyTrust

### STAFF

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LaVerne Carlile Dean, *Teen Court Administrator*

Joseph Aleandre, *Juvenile Services Specialist*

Juan Aspajo, *Juvenile Services Specialist*

Shirley Sieger, *Juvenile Services Specialist*

Frank J. Tarrau, *Training Specialist*

Zachary Rinkins, *Youth Entrepreneurship Program Mgr*

Ralph McCloud, *Student Court Specialist*

Dr. Ichaji N. Robertson, *Clinical Psychologist*

Melba C. Gasque, *Marketing Administrator*

Araceli Acosta, *Office Support Specialist, Lead Worker*

Bernadette Artistide, *Office Support Specialist*

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

Miami-Dade County  
**Teen Court** 

*Deferring Excellence Every Day*

 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

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