

# MDEAT's Teen Court

WINTER 2015

*news*

**Providing Youth with a Second Chance**

## Students sign up for Teen Court at local college and career fair

Few things are easier to top than an eager, enthusiastic teenager. Imagine a roomful of them! That was the case at the College and Career Fair at the Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial High School, where Teen Court staff promoted its program to nearly 400 high schoolers. The school offered the event to connect students with recruiters from numerous local, state, and national community programs, colleges and universities, law enforcement agencies, and volunteer opportunities.

Teen Court was one of the more popular programs at the fair, with 40 students visiting its table including 16 who signed up on the spot to volunteer. Many of them had heard of Teen Court either through schoolmates who have volunteered in the program or teachers. One student even heard about it from her mom who is a local attorney.



## New volunteers receive legal training at St. Thomas University

Teen Court partnered with St. Thomas University Law School to train a new wave of youth attorneys during its annual three-day summer Youth Volunteer Attorney Training Program and Mock Trial Competition at the college. More than 150 students received formal training from St. Thomas law school students covering courtroom etiquette to delivering closing arguments. Mock trials were held on the final day of training and were judged by members of the Florida Bar Association.



## Teen Court undergoes look, staff changes

Over the past few months Miami-Dade County Teen Court has undergone change in staff and its brand identity. Tony Williams, who served as the Teen Court director retired in August 2014 after working eight years at Teen Court and more than 30 years in public service overall. Frank Tarrau, the program's training specialist, also retired in August 2014.

The new training specialist is Zachary Rinkins, the program's former youth entrepreneurship manager. Rinkins now conducts the full gamut of training workshops from anti-theft to starting a business. Melba Gasque, the former marketing administrator, moved on to another county department. The new marketing administrator is Susana Cortázar. She brings more than 20 years of marketing, media, and public relations experience.

Teen Court also got a new look. In addition to a color change, the program's identifier received a facelift with the incorporation of the name of its parent organization as displayed through Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy's acronym MDEAT. Teen Court is one of three areas of concentration for MDEAT. It is a part of the agency's "Three Gears of Progress" with economic development and housing serving as the other two gears. These three gears work together to help create economic change in designated communities across the county.



# TEENS REPORT

Teen Stories & Editorials



**Da'Jah Jordan**  
**William H. Turner**  
**Technical Arts**  
**High School**  
**(Central)**

Teen Court has been a wonderful experience for me. I started as a juror and watched the attorneys at work. Then I was "promoted" to clerk and bailiff, and this showed me the responsibilities and paper work that go with the job. I attended the three-day attorney training which actually prepared me to become a Teen Court attorney. I have come to the conclusion that becoming a defense attorney is something I may want to pursue as a career. This pro-

gram is an excellent way for youth, especially those who want to get involved in law and/or public service, to become exposed to different roles in the court system. It has been an extreme pleasure for me to have defended a young person who has his or her whole life ahead. I am so fortunate to have found this program.



**Alexander Perez**  
**Law Enforcement**  
**Officers' Memorial**  
**High School**  
**(South & Central)**

I've been attending Teen Court for the past two years and it has been an amazing experience. This summer I was chosen to volunteer in the Youth Intern Part-

nership Initiative (YIPI), which enables Teen Court volunteers to gather experience at law firms, summer camps, and chambers of commerce. I had the privilege of working for the South Dade Chamber of Commerce in Homestead. Its president, Rosa Brito, was a wonderful mentor, who guided me through proper business practices. The people I met and helped were interesting and nice.

At age 17, I have taken this experience with me into my school career, as being a part of YIPI has taught me responsibility, time-management, and to have fun sitting at a desk while still being professional. Teen Court provides volunteers with great opportunities to improve themselves and take on the real world. Thank you, Teen Court!

## Teen stat

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, there were 12,327 offenses committed by juveniles in Florida between January and June, 2014. These crimes include robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, murder, and forcible sex offenses.

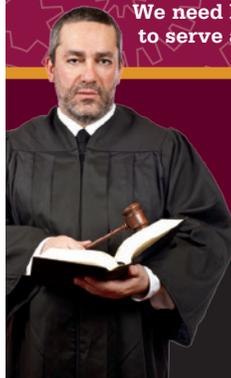
# Judges • Lawyers • Legal Professionals Volunteer to Inspire!

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](http://www.miamidade.gov/EconomicAdvocacyTrust)  
 T 305.375.5661 • [MDEATInfo@miamidade.gov](mailto:MDEATInfo@miamidade.gov)



# Volunteer Corner

## Estefani Arroyo, Teen Volunteer

Estefani Arroyo, a student at Miami-Dade College, participated in a mini-internship at the law firm of Foley and Mansfield. Beranton J. Whisenant, Esq., a partner at the firm's Miami office, serves as a Teen Court volunteer judge.

With aspirations of serving in the legal field, Estefani learned some basic principles of law, argued a practice case (Moot Court case), and observed Whisenant on some of his assignments. She found the experience exciting and her participation provided credits toward her high school graduation. She was also a Teen Court volunteer during 2013-2014. She and two other students made



*Estefani Arroyo at work*

a presentation at this year's annual Teen Court conference on the benefits of volunteering. Her performance was well received.

## Robert Lynne, Esquire

For more than ten years, MDEAT's Teen Court has been privileged to have Judge Robert Lynne as a presiding volunteer judge. Having moved to Florida at nine months of age, Judge Lynne considers himself a true Floridian and understands the importance of community involvement for the improvement of its residents.

Judge Lynne was first introduced to Teen Court by

one of his associates. He said he was immediately impressed by its importance as an alternative intervention program, as well as by staff's professionalism and commitment. "For the young adults who participate as a result of a youthful mistake, this program provides them the opportunity to help themselves learn from their actions," Judge Lynne explained. "It is also helpful for those who sit as jurors to learn about our legal system."



*Judge Robert Lynne*

He said it is an honor to sit as a judge and watch "my kids" grow through this program, go off to college - many with deserved scholarships - and to work first-hand with many who he believes will be tomorrow's leaders.

Judge Lynne attended school on Miami Beach and graduated from the University of Florida with bachelor's and juris doctor degrees. During law school he spent one summer teaching English in Brazil. He currently practices workers compensation defense law. In addition to Teen Court, his passion for community service extends to organizations such as American Red Cross, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Kidney Foundation, and Guardian Ad Litem.

Judge Lynne is married with three children and two grandchildren. And after everything he does for the community, how does he find the time to enjoy his favorite hobbies? He bikes and reads.

Thank you for your support, Judge Lynne! We look forward to many more years of your participation in Teen Court.

## Student Court – A great program to help students stay in school

An exciting partnership has been forged between the Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust's (MDEAT) Teen Court and the Miami-Dade County Public Schools to help youth stay positively engaged in school and avoid the penal system through a school-based referral process program called Student Court.

Students are provided with curricula, character development tools, law education, and related services that support the program goals and lead to improved performance in academic achievement, school attendance, and discipline.

MDEAT has provided the required training for school



**MDEAT**  
Miami-Dade Economic  
Advocacy Trust



**Student Court**  
A Division of Miami-Dade County Teen Court

administration, instructional staff, and students, and successfully implemented the program in 15 senior high schools throughout Miami-Dade County. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's school administration to find out about participation. For more information on Student Court, visit <https://www.miamidadegov/EconomicAdvocacyTrust/teen-court.asp>.

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

## Teen law fact

All states have laws dealing with the "emancipation" of minors - that is, laws that specify when and under what conditions children may become independent of their parents for important legal purposes.



A complete reference to statutory provisions for all 50 states pertaining to termination of parental rights, age of majority, or emancipation itself, can be found in the LII State Law pages [http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/table\\_emancipation](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/table_emancipation).

## Teen Court news

### Miami-Dade County Teen Court

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Miami, FL 33128  
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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

## Miami-Dade County Teen Court

Providing Youth with a Second Chance