

# MEDINA COUNTY JUVENILE AND PROBATE COURT NEWSLETTER

JUDGE KEVIN W. DUNN SEPTEMBER 2013

## TEEN COURT DIVERSION PROGRAM BEGINS

The Medina County Juvenile Teen Court Diversion Program began its fourth round this month since the program began in 2010.

18 student volunteers attended the Teen Court training day Saturday, September 28 at the Courthouse Annex building with Teen Court advisors; Magistrate Susana Lewis, Chief Probation Officer Jodi Albertson, Director of Programming Phillip Titterington, and Public Defender Maria Copetas. Also in attendance was Detective Sarah Hosta from the Brunswick Police Department, who spoke about law enforcement in the community and how police reports are filed with the courts.

The students began their morning learning juvenile court vocabulary and how a juvenile offender gets involved in this diversion program.

“When a juvenile offender participates in Teen Court, they have to go before a jury of their own peers and it’s scary for them,” Magistrate Lewis said. “I would have been terrified to do that when I was younger, but in the end if they complete all orders,



2013-2014 Medina County Teen Court Team

their case is dismissed, almost as if it was never filed in Juvenile Court.”

There are usually one to two hearings held during each monthly Teen Court session.

Students work alongside the guidance of professionals, to prepare and present their side of an actual juvenile court case to a jury of the defendant’s peers.

The volunteer jury will ultimately decide the consequences and

sanctions, which may include but are not limited to, community service hours, restitution made to victims and handwritten letters of apology.

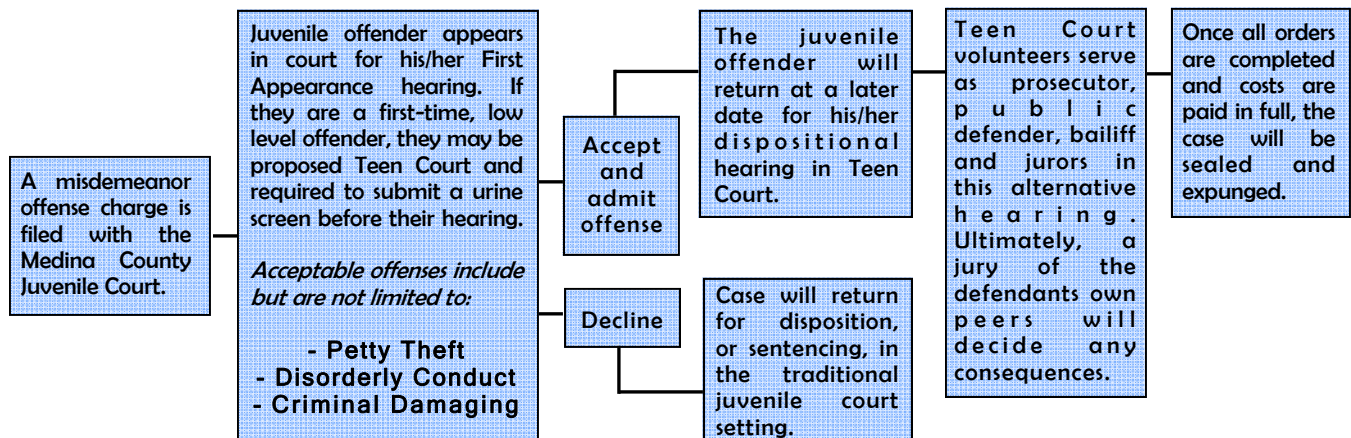
The jury will also order future participation in Teen Court, allowing the offender to experience the other side of the court case as a fellow jury member at the next month’s Teen Court hearings.

Magistrate Lewis explained that more often than not, the Court does not see the juvenile offenders who participate in Teen Court return with new charges.

Teen Court is a nationally recognized program that is proven to reduce crime, according to the Urban Institute’s Evaluation of Teen Courts Project. The evaluation determined that six-month recidivism

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## HOW THE TEEN COURT DIVERSION PROGRAM WORKS:



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## COURT ADMINISTRATOR EARNS NATIONAL CERTIFICATION



Medina County Juvenile and Probate Court Administrator Sharon Danko, CCM, CCE is one of just 37 Ohio court professionals to be the first to earn a national Certified Court Executive certification.

Danko completed six years of training, completing the Level I and Level II executive certification programs covering topics ranging from leadership to strategic planning to court community communication.

She attended the graduation ceremony at the Thomas J. Moyer Ohio Judicial Center September 27, 2013 in Columbus, Ohio, accompanied by Judge Kevin W. Dunn and retired Medina County Juvenile and Probate Judge

John J. Lohn.

"This certification gives me the knowledge and expertise to manage our court," Danko said. "The focus of the training was the purposes, goals and accessibility of the Court to the community and making sure I understand the best practices for us to run effectively."

Danko became Medina Juvenile and Probate Court Administrator in 2004 and began training for this certification in 2007.

The Certified Court Executive credential program was offered through a partnership with the Ohio Supreme Court Judicial College and the National Center for State Courts Institute for Court Management.

Other graduates of the program include fellow court administrators, elected and appointed clerks, chief probation officers, and other court staff in management positions throughout Ohio.

## NEW PROBATION OFFICER JOINS DRUG COURT TEAM

The Medina County Drug Court team has gained a new member after former Drug Court P.O. Misty Hanson transferred to become Chief P.O. in Wayne County this past July. Christy Forsch was sworn in by Judge Kevin Dunn Monday, September 30 to begin her job as the new Drug Court Probation Officer monitoring youth involved in the Non-Intensive Component of Drug Court, as well as Family Resource Court and Multi-Systemic Therapy Programs.

Forsch, a 2008 University of Akron graduate, has worked previously with the

Victim Assistance Program in Akron, Ohio as a municipal court advocate.

"I think having been in that position will help me because I already know court language, although I know there are differences between juvenile and adult court," Forsch said.

Forsch will gradually begin meeting the juveniles under her supervision, approximately 20 youth, in the coming weeks.

"I hope it's an easy transition for them as well," she said. "My goal is to learn the job quickly and get (the juveniles) on the right track."

### Teen Court continued

figures; a relapse of criminal behavior, among the four teen courts studied, ranged from only six to nine percent.

This is credited to the concept of restorative justice, helping offenders develop the skills to not re-offend, by promoting accountability, fairness and the safety of adolescents in the community.

Teen Court also offers a financial incentive for the juvenile offender and their family, only costing a fraction of the total amount in fees and fines that may be ordered in a traditional hearing.

"There is a Teen Court fee of \$50," Chief P.O. Albertson said. "Additionally, there may be a cost for community service and restitution, but it's minimal compared to the cost of a traditional hearing which can cost anywhere from \$180 or more."

But not only does Teen Court serve as a prevention program for youthful offenders, it also provides an educational program for students.

During training, students participated in a mock petty theft trial to prepare for their roles as prosecutor, public defender, bailiff and jury.

Most of this year's student volunteers are interested in a career in law, while others said this program may persuade them to change their path.

"This is a great group we have this year," Magistrate Lewis told the volunteers after the mock trial, applauding them for catching on to the roles so quickly and understanding the process.

The first Teen Court hearing will be held Tuesday, October 8.

## COURT EVENTS

### October 9

Wear orange to support Bullying Awareness Day.

### October 14

The Medina County Juvenile and Probate Court will be closed for Columbus Day.

### October 28

Participants in the Girls Circle Program will celebrate successful completion of the 12-week program.

### November 30

Deadline for the 2013 Stomp Out Suicide Video Contest. For more information, visit [alternativepaths.org](http://alternativepaths.org).