

Medina County Common Pleas Court

PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISIONS

93 PUBLIC SQUARE, ROOM 104, MEDINA, OHIO 44256

Kevin W. Dunn
Judge

MEDIA RELEASE

October 9, 2013

Medina County Teen Court Begins Fourth Season

23 students from area high schools volunteer to assist in the nationally recognized juvenile diversion program



MEDINA –Teen Court began its fourth season Tuesday, October 8, 2013 with a record 23 student volunteers representing nearly every Medina County high school. In this successful diversion program, students take on the roles of prosecutor, public defender, bailiff and jurors. They are assisted by a Medina County Assistant Prosecutor and an Assistant Public Defender in an alternative to traditional juvenile court proceedings.

Teen Court focuses on the goals of restorative justice, accountability, public safety and victim sensitivity, where first time offenders must answer to their peers in approved misdemeanor cases. Judge Dunn said the goal of this program is not to punish the offender, but to utilize principals of restorative justice in hopes that juvenile offenders will respond positively to the influence of their peers, right the wrong and not re-offend.

After the juvenile admits to their charge, they will go before Teen Court for sentencing and may be ordered community service, to pay restitution, write a hand-written letter of apology, complete the Theft Offenders Program and other orders as the jury recommends. In addition, the juvenile offender is ordered

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to return as a juror for at least one future Teen Court session. Upon successful completion of these orders, the juvenile offender's record is dismissed and expunged.

"This program is so great because it's giving youth in our community a hands-on experience," Judge Dunn said. "Most of these kids that volunteer are leaders at their schools and may be very different from the offenders, but this program isn't exclusive because those offenders will come back and join the volunteers by participating as a juror. It adds to the legitimacy of the program."

Since the program began in Medina County in 2010, Teen Court has heard 50 misdemeanor cases and has a recidivism rate, or relapse of criminal behavior, of only four and half percent.

The benefit of this program is not only to assist the juvenile offenders to resist engaging in crime or problematic behavior in the future, but also serves an educational purpose for volunteer students interested in a career in law and law enforcement.

In collaboration with Jarrod Fry from Medina Cable Access, Teen Court advisors utilized a new training tool this year, a 30-minute informational mock trial video showing how the Teen Court process works.

"I think the video was helpful," Judge Dunn said. "It provides an overview before the volunteers actually jump into the process."

Judge Dunn said he hopes the program encourages the volunteers and previous juvenile offenders to continue to exercise their civic duties, stay informed and support that laws and processes of the community.

The Teen Court Program will continue until the end of May. Applications for the next Medina County Teen Court season will be provided to local high schools in Fall 2014.