



Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

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Utah's Teen Court Movement

They called themselves his friends. They talked him into trespassing at an elementary school. He watched as they threw rocks at a neighbor's satellite dish. He skipped school with them and then sat in a car smoking cigarettes even though he's only 13 years old.

"Do you find yourself getting into trouble when you're with these friends?" the teen wearing a black robe asked him.

The boy behind the podium nodded.

"Then maybe you should make better choices about who you hang around with," he said. "Friends that always get you into trouble should be seriously reconsidered."

The admonishment came from a boy just a few years older than the teen who'd been cited by American Fork Police four times for minor crimes like possession of tobacco, truancy, criminal mischief and

trespassing.

Peer and Youth Courts are becoming an increasingly popular way of dealing with minor crimes and infractions involving juveniles for a number of reasons. First, it takes some of the case load off juvenile courts. Second, it allows the juvenile cited the chance to resolve the crime without having a record of any kind. And third, it affords non-delinquent teens the chance to help their peers and learn about the justice system.

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice has given thousands of dollars in grant money to a number of Youth Court programs in the last few years. Recently the board decided that it will cap the amount of its grants in this arena at \$5,000 and only if that's for start up costs. Cities, police departments and school districts must make the time and money commitment to keep the courts running.

The reason for the new

policy is due to the many requests that come in every year from communities hoping to do what American Fork City and Police Department have done.

UBJJ members are very supportive of the concept, but hope by offering limited financial help, cities will still

"It's fun. And we're giving kids a second chance at life without a permanent criminal record."

be able to create new youth courts, and the remainder of the grant money can be used to develop other new programs for troubled teens.

The older boy is one of three teenage judges presiding

over American Fork's Youth Court. The younger boy was referred to the court by police and his appearance there is voluntary. He's sentenced to community service hours, ordered to pay restitution to the man who owned the damaged satellite dish and asked to turn in an essay on smoking. For the essay, the judges ask him to interview a lung cancer patient who smoked.

"Don't just blow it off because this is for you," one of the other judges says. They ask him to quit smoking, too.

"It's your choice to quit, but the consequences are not your choice," the third judge tells him. Another adds, "You have six years before it's even legal for you to buy cigarettes."

The boy tells the older teens he will try to quit smoking. He said his brothers got him hooked on tobacco, but believes he can stop with help from his mother. She sits

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Delinquency Prevention and Impacting Serious Juvenile Crime the Focus of Newly Funded Projects

The Board awarded over \$360,000 to six new juvenile justice programs designed to prevent or reduce juvenile crime and delinquency.

Under the Title II Grant Program, the following four projects received start-up

funding.

Bear River Mental Health received \$15,000 to institute a truancy prevention program.

The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salt Lake & Colors of Success received \$70,000 to implement Visions, a transi-

tional after-care program for youth leaving secure facilities.

Both San Juan County Sheriff's Office and the Provo Police Department received funds (\$50,000 and \$63,684) to implement SHOCAP to tar

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I Remember Farrell

Ronald N. Vance
Chairman

There are days after dealing with my children when I wonder why. Why should I be the responsible one? If they don't want to go to bed at a reasonable hour, why should I care? If they don't want to do their homework, why should I make them? If they don't want to help out around the house, why should I teach them how to work?

The answer is simple. I am responsible for them and if I don't do it, who will?

Shortly after I joined the Board, we held a retreat in Park City. One of the speakers at the conference was Farrell Lines. I remember him telling about how he had first been introduced to juvenile justice.

As an attorney in New Mexico, he had been assigned by a judge to represent a young

man who had committed some minor offence. As a result of the infraction the youth had been put in jail with adults. While incarcerated, the boy was beaten and molested.

Farrell could not believe that this kind of treatment of this young man or any of our youth could occur in this day and age.

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New Projects Receive Funds

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to target serious offenders through collaborative efforts.

The Iron County Youth Center received \$70,000 to provide shelter services for run-away and abused youth.

Under the Title V Delinquency Prevention Grant Program, two programs were funded. Clearfield City received \$81,696 to implement a program that targets chronic truants. Bountiful City received \$87,185 to expand the PROS Club (see Program Profile) to all nine of its elementary schools.

The Title II Program is authorized under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Each state receives a formula amount based on juvenile population. Funds must be used for new and innovative programs designed to prevent and/or reduce juvenile crime and delinquency. All projects can be funded for up to three years (four years for non-profits) at declining amounts for each subsequent year of funding.

The Title V Program requires units of local government to conduct a risks and needs assessment and then develop a three-year plan based on the assessment. Projects can receive full funding for three years. A fifty percent cash and/or in-kind match is required.

All grant funds for fiscal year 1999-2000 have been allocated. The Board encourages you to begin planning now in order to apply for funds next spring. Check out UBJJ's grant information and application forms at www.justice.state.ut.us in the Spring of 2000. ■

Teen Courts Benefit Offenders and Peers

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behind him in the first row of seats. When he pays his fine, she hands him the money.

One of the judges tells him he must pay his mother back. "She didn't get the fine," he said.

The boy is relieved to have the court appearance completed and plans to get his community service done as quickly as possible. He's the reason the courts were created. But the courts have also come to benefit teens like those wearing the black robes. Youngsters like Quincy Fowler.

At 16, he's working as a bailiff. He hopes to become a judge soon because he thinks it looks interesting.

"I've done everything else," he said. (There are prosecutors, bailiffs and mentors.) Fowler signed up for the volunteer program with a friend because he said he wanted to "do something for the community."

But in fact, it's the program that's done something for him. He said he's had fun while learning about the system and the consequences of bad decisions.

"I've learned a little bit

about the law," Fowler said.

"It's probably helped keep me out of trouble, because if I'd gotten into any trouble at all, I wouldn't have been able to participate in the court. It's fun. And we're giving kids a second chance at life without a permanent criminal record."

The best part about being involved in the program, he said, is "just being able to help someone else."

American Fork is just one of 33 communities in Utah that have Youth Courts. The police department runs its court, while in Salt Lake City, the court is run by the school district. Each court is a little different, but all have the same foundation--to help resolve minor crimes and keep those children from getting into any more trouble.

"It's a non-adversarial, collaborative court," said Kathleen Zeitlin, the program director for Salt Lake's court. Now in its sixth year, Zeitlin said Salt Lake's youth court tries not to place blame or punish. Instead, the teens are trained in conflict resolution and they hope to teach other youngsters to be accountable and take responsibility for their actions.

Children are able to complete community service hours in a number of ways, including helping build houses for homeless and poor families, working with the elderly or spending time helping the arts community.

Last year, in an effort to provide communities with some guidelines for creating and running Youth Courts, legislation was passed solidifying the concept. The new law sets out guidelines for what cases Youth Courts can handle, who can sponsor a court and allows students to get school credit for participating in courts as volunteers.

The law standardizes the courts, but still allows communities to shape them to their individual needs. All participants in any Youth Court must volunteer and must admit to the crime they're charged with. Prosecutors must also agree that the case can be dealt with by the Youth Court.

All involved say Youth Courts are good for both the students who've gotten into trouble and those trying to help them straighten out.

The Utah Attorney General sponsors the youth court website: www.attygen.state.ut.us. ■

PROS Club Contributes to Drop in School Crime

Everyone's heard of, and maybe even been a member of, groups like the Drama Club, the Chess Club, the Debate Club and even the always effervescent Pep Club. But what about the PROS Club? Ever see a sign up sheet for that?

That's because this club doesn't have one. Its membership changes each year, and it's by invitation only.

While it may be less notorious, it is notable for one very important reason: It's changing the lives of some Bountiful teens for the better. At the beginning of every school year, a Bountiful police officer takes 12 to 15 junior high school students and forms a club.

The children are considered "at risk" for criminal behavior by school and law enforcement officials. The officers spend time showing their club members that there are alternatives to fighting, that destroying property isn't the best way to have a good time, and that personal satisfaction can be found quite simply in serving other people.

One of the risk factors for these young people is that they lack an attachment to their school and/or community, according to David Turner, the director of Davis County's Safe Home, School and Community Executive Committee. So officers spend

time trying to build a bond between the students and their schools and communities.

The PROS Club members swim and ski and study together. They pick up trash, clean up yards and take gifts to homes for the elderly.

"They just spend time together," Turner said. "One of the goals is to get the kids aware of what services the city, the community, the schools offer."

Officers also teach students in law related education classes. They discuss such topics as being an accessory to a crime, which can be simply watching friends commit a crime from a car.

Now in its third year, PROS boasts more than anecdotal success.

Turner measured the program in three areas: gang membership, incidents of violence/fighting, and destruction of property. All four schools with PROS Clubs decreased their gang membership by 55 percent. The school also decreased their incidents of violence and fighting by 64 percent.

Property damage stayed about the same in all four schools, although, Turner points out that the year before PROS was instituted, property damage jumped 48 percent from the previous year.

Even more significantly, there was an 80 percent drop in the number of PROS students involved in violent incidents. Meanwhile, they completed 24 service projects in Bountiful communities. They learned that alcohol and tobacco hurt more people than they ever help.

And probably most importantly, 93 percent said they

now had an adult with whom they could discuss problems. Before entering PROS, only 34 percent of those same teens said that was something they had at school.

In the past four years, Bountiful City Police report a significant drop in the number of juveniles arrested. In 1995,

police arrested 1,083 teens. By 1998 that number had dropped to 508.

And that means that PROS members aren't just bettering their own lives, they're improving the quality of life for the entire Bountiful community. ■

Farrell

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Farrell was always an outspoken advocate of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. He truly believed in its core principles. He believed that our youth should not be treated like adults in all instances. He also believed that no young man should be forced to endure the pain and humiliation which his first youth client had suffered. Farrell went on to become one of the leaders of the National Coalition and influenced me to become involved with the Coalition as well.

Farrell passed away a few months ago, but I have not forgotten him. He had a profound impact on how I viewed juvenile justice. He was not a radical. He didn't shout his message or advocate radical actions to secure the continuance of the Act and its core requirements. He taught that the core principles of the act were common sense. He provided logical and reasonable debate while maintaining civility among people who had divergent ideas about how youth should be treated. He taught us and others in a way that made

you feel his passion and want to emulate him and his beliefs. He taught us that as reasonable thinking individuals, we could make a difference in our state and communities through our continued efforts to support these core principles and through teaching others their importance.

As I witness the continued assault by Congress, the media, and others on the juvenile justice system and delinquent youth, sometimes I think, "What's the use; if they want to start treating juveniles like adults, what difference can I make?" But then I remember Farrell. If someone like him, who had nothing to gain personally or professionally, believed that the Act and its core requirements were important enough to continue fighting for, can I do less?

It is my hope that we can remember the responsibility we have as advocates for youth to teach others of the importance of the core values of the Act, not because it's politically correct, but because it's in the best interests of our youth. If we don't do it, who will? ■

Got a new program idea? PROS received \$72,045 over a three-year period through the Title V Program. Check out the UBJJ grants section on the web. www.justice.state.ut.us.

FAS Focus of Western/Midwestern Meeting

The chick experiment was compelling.

Put two chicks in a room behind a window looking out on a food dish. The chick born from an embryo without alcohol introduced quickly finds the door out of the room and to the food dish. The chick born from an alcohol injected embryo cannot find the door and bangs against the window.

Do this experiment again with other alcohol affected chicks and the results are the same. Some chicks can eventually be taught how to find the door. Others never find the door no matter how many times they are taught.

Such is the mystery of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).

At the July Western/Midwest Coalition Meeting attended by the Board, the link between FAS and juvenile

delinquency was presented by well-known researcher, Dr. Ann P. Steissguth from the University of Washington School of Medicine.

It is estimated that 1% of the population suffers from this preventable birth defect. The challenge is diagnosing the problem. In some cases, there are obvious facial deformities such as drooping eyes and flattened features. In other cases, the physical characteristics are slight and as the child grows older, much more difficult to discern.

Youth with FAS are more likely to fail in school, commit suicide, and become involved in the juvenile justice system.

Training on FAS for individuals that work with youth is limited. "We don't receive any training on this, but we should," said Debbie

Rocha, a UBJJ Board member who also works for the Division of Youth Corrections.

Jocie DeVries, mother of two adopted FAS children said that specific interventions are needed when working with FAS children and professionals must be trained on FAS.

The plight of homeless youth and conducting drug assessments were also presented at the meeting.

Following the training, juvenile justice boards from the western and midwest states held business meetings to discuss federal juvenile justice bills, HB 1501 and SB 254. This is the third year juvenile justice legislation has stalled. Congress plans to look at the bills again in September.

Elections were also held and Utah's Andrea Burton was elected to serve on CJJ's Nomination Committee. ■

Fall Board of Directors' Meeting

Salt Lake City will be hosting the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's Fall Board of Directors' Meeting November 10-14 at the Little America Hotel.

The Coalition is the national voice for each state's juvenile justice board. The Coalition provides training, tracks legislation, and has been a recognized voice in Congress when it comes to juvenile justice related bills.

The theme of the conference is "Who Holds the Keys? The Status of Juvenile Confinement."

Local and national juvenile justice experts will discuss compliance with OJJDP's core requirements for housing juvenile offenders, the move to privatize facilities, and the conditions of confinement for juveniles across the nation. ■

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