

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH COURTS

January 2021 Edition

OUR MISSION

To constrain the school-to-prison pipelines by providing unique, peer-driven restorative justice models as alternatives to the traditional juvenile justice system

To empower young people to take an active role in addressing criminal offenses of their peers and expand access to justice



“Justice for Youth by Youth”

FEATURED YOUTH COURT



**ACT NOW
TO HELP TRANSFORM
“PIPELINES-TO-PRISON”
INTO
“STAIRWAYS-TO-SUCCESS.”**

Marin County Youth Court - We educate youth about the juvenile justice system. Through direct participation, Marin Youth Court addresses each juvenile's responsibility for his or her behavior and holds juveniles accountable to their community and peers.



The original YMCA Marin County Youth Court was an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system. The Youth Court's transformative power is derived from its non-adversarial, peer-to-peer restorative practices. Based on the principles of restorative justice, Marin Youth Court empowers youth to take an active role in addressing and supporting their peers when they have acknowledged accountability for breaking the law. The goal of restorative justice is to repair the harm done, the relationships impacted and provide offenders with increased skills so they may reengage the community as more reflective and wiser young adults.

For more information on MCYC visit: <https://marinyouthcourt.weebly.com/>

STUDENT'S FORUM

Youth Court Testimonial from a Rural County – Submitted by Humboldt County Teen Court

“We have heard cries across the nation both for and against the call to defund the police. What does it mean to defund the police? Taken at face value, the argument is that it is a radical suggestion that would endanger citizens. I want to speak up as a youth who is concerned about the future and help clarify the intention behind the concept of defunding the police.

What it really means to defund the police is that a portion of the large budget allotted to law enforcement would be invested in public health and social services. The idea is to assist officers in the line of duty through supporting them in situations where social service professionals have the ability and expertise to serve communities and solve complex problems that aren't addressed adequately through law enforcement alone. I strongly believe that this is a much more appropriate and effective way to ensure public safety as it will allow law enforcement officers to get back to the job of serving and protecting the public from truly predatory criminal actions and other public safety issues.

When public officials are faced with the overlap between crime, drug use, homelessness, and mental health issues it has become normal to accept these human tragedies as facts of life that can't be fixed. The focus on “getting people off the street” by jailing them seems like a losing battle to eliminate the harm caused by these offenses. The truth about crime and drug use is that they are not the problem, but rather a symptom of the real problem. People often resort to crime and drug use after they experience traumatic events, because they struggle with mental health, or grow up in poverty, to name a few. Public health and social services will be able to use additional funding to address the root causes of many offenses, thus supporting law enforcement, not taking anything away from them.

As a volunteer for the Humboldt County Teen Court program, I am speaking from experience. Teen Court provides an invaluable service to our community. We serve local youth by offering them an alternative to the juvenile justice system. We operate according to harm reduction and restorative justice principles.

I have dedicated close to 100 hours of service to this program and in that time, I have observed my struggling peers receive attention and the opportunity to be heard and understood. I have been part of developing plans for these young people to find new paths to success. The recidivism rate for participants of Teen Court is notably lower than that of those who are put through the traditional system.

Most importantly, I have personally witnessed my fellow youth gain new perspectives on life. Interestingly, I have reconnected with participants for whom I served as youth attorney more than once. In that role I strove to advocate for and help a jury understand their life circumstances while making suggestions to help change the course of their lives. I have run into these same young people at their first jobs and participating, for the first time in their lives, in high school clubs. I know that this kind of solution-oriented service works to reorient real lives toward successful futures.

I close this testimony reiterating that community resources and organizations, like Humboldt County Teen Court, are integral to the health of our community and societal progress as a whole. Let's make the need for police obsolete by fostering meaningful connections and uplifting all members of our community.”

-Stella

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Hon. Charles H. Ervin

We enter a new year amidst ongoing health and social justice issues we will always remember. Overcoming the challenges and building resilience are more important than ever. Despite the constant turmoil, media noise and distractions in the world, our lives are improving daily. Daylight is lasting longer every day. Vaccine is spreading faster than the pandemic. Restorative justice alternatives to traditional criminal justice processes are choking off more school-to-prison pipelines while saving and improving young lives.

Now is the time to consider how you can increase your enjoyment of the future and help others at the same time. This article suggests ways you can reach the brighter horizon ahead and benefit everyone you encounter along the way during your journey. When do you start? Where do you want to go? How do you get there? Who can help?

It is said that the best time to plant a tree is years ago so it would be spreading its beauty and benefits today. The next best time to plant a tree is now for the sake of what it will bring in the future. Start planting your tree of goals today. The secret is to make a plan and put it in writing immediately. Having realistic short, medium and long-term goals is essential for effective planning. It's like following a recipe to bake a cake. If you take the cake ingredients in the right proportions, mix

them together and put them in the oven at the proper temperature for the time as directed, when it's time to open the oven you will have a perfectly-baked cake. If you don't follow the recipe, there's no telling what's going to come out of the oven, except you likely will be disappointed. It's predicable. You can control your destiny by making your plan, setting appropriate and attainable goals and consummating the plan, just like following a recipe.

Determining where you want to go involves identifying topics and objectives, setting interim goals and implementing a long-term plan to attain those goals, over and over. Topics may include school, personal life, social life, athletics, a job, volunteering, mentoring or seeking a mentor and the like. You name it. You can do this. As you identify them, set as many goals as you can. Write them down. Start with short term – today; medium term – tomorrow; long term – a week. Expand them by taking them up a level making your new short term – a week; medium term – a month; long term – the rest of the school year. Boost them to the next higher level, making your new short term – the rest of the school year; medium term – the summer break; long term – the rest of 2021. Make your plan and carry out the plan one step at a time. As you attain your goals, check them off your list. Always reward yourself when you achieve a set of goals. Set your goals high and never give up in your quest to attain them.

How you get to your destination in any plan requires repetition of your plan processes with a positive outlook as you accumulate energy and satisfaction from your achievements. Your success is not just an event; it is a continuing process which you constantly review and revise as needed.

Researchers say a third of our population is anxious and discouraged about the future. You can avoid being in that group and help others escape from it. Face your fears head-on. Amidst the daily distractions, you can plan for and build your own safe harbor oasis for future planning, reaching out and achieving your goals. You can and will make lemonade out of the lemons which have fallen upon us. Empower yourself. Stare down your fears and overcome them by isolating them from your positive thoughts. Stay in focus.

Set aside time to care for and invest in your own physical and mental health. Be proactive in protecting and improving each aspect of your health. Do a Google search to check out meditation and mindfulness tools which help alleviate anxiety, aid in attaining focus and contribute to better overall physical and mental health. Search for doctors, dentists and medical clinics which offer free or inexpensive examinations. Reach out to others and urge them to follow your example. Be a friend to someone who needs a friend.

Energize yourself and the world one good deed at a time. You and everyone you help will feel better and build an even stronger foundation to move forward. Reach out to help someone. Do some yard work for a neighbor who can't do it. Do an errand for someone who can't get out of the house. Help other students with their school work. Apply for a job, schooling, or volunteering. Do some community service. Become a mentor or seek a mentor. Get involved and reach out to other youth to share the concept of peer mediation and restorative justice concepts. Get involved with your local youth court. If you don't have one, start one. Be creative and act promptly.

Check out the tools at:

- www.calyouthcourts.com. (Youth Court resources)
- www.kidsmanagingconflict.org. (Peer Mediation resources)
- www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org (Mentoring resources)
- www.mentoring.org (Mentoring resources)
- www.niroga.org (Meditation and mindfulness resources)

Consider following the link www.drugfreekern.org/hope-through-mentoring-conference to register for and attend the FREE “Hope Through Mentoring Conference” which provides tools for connecting with youth; strategies for success; understanding trauma; creating transformations; and building resilient families with Hope Through Mentoring.

Count your blessings, stay strong and be well. You can make 2021 your best year ever.

Hon. Charles H. Ervin, President
California Association of Youth Courts

“JUSTICE FOR YOUTH BY YOUTH”

FEATURED PERSON/BOARD MEMBER



J. RICHARD COUZENS

Judge of the Placer County Superior Court, State of California (Ret.)

Judge Couzens served on the Placer County Superior Court for 25 years. Since his retirement in 2005, he has continued to sit in superior courts across the state by assignment from the Chief Justice, and serves as a special consultant to the Criminal Justice Services Office of the California Judicial Council. He is a former member of the California Judicial Council and the California State and Federal Judicial Council. He was the presiding judge of the Placer County juvenile court for over ten years. His regular caseload included juvenile delinquency and dependency proceedings. He helped establish and was chair of the Placer County Special Multi-Discipline Assessment and Referral Team (S.M.A.R.T) from its inception in 1988 through 1997. SMART is a collaborative team for the delivery of juvenile services to at-risk youth and their families. In 1990 Judge Couzens formed the Placer County Peer Court program that focused positive peer pressure on first-time youthful offenders and offered a unique education program in the schools. The program received state and national recognition for its innovative approaches to juvenile delinquency. He served as president of the Placer County Peer Court board of directors. **He helped form the California Association of Youth Courts and the National Association of Youth Courts. He is a past-president of both organizations and currently serves on their boards of directors.** For over 20 years Judge Couzens has taught California judges and attorneys the law and procedure related to criminal and juvenile law. He is co-author of three books on criminal law and procedure published for judges and lawyers by The Rutter Group. He was a faculty member of the B.E. Witkin Judicial College for California judges for over 20 years, specializing in criminal law and procedure. He has been a presenter at many state and national conferences on youth courts. In 2008 he was named Jurist of the Year by the California Judicial Council.

LATEST NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Programs Committee

- In light of COVID-19, CAYC is currently in the process of presenting a “Virtual Summit” planned for June 22-24, 2021. Specific details highlighting this unique and innovative method of recruiting, training and educating future students in youth courts will be forthcoming in our next newsletter scheduled for April 2021.
- The California Association of Youth Courts (CAYC), in partnership with the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Nevada, Reno, (UNR) is beginning a study of the effectiveness of select youth courts in California. This impact assessment will begin with the collection of individual case-level data from several existing youth court programs. The researchers are interested in violation data, outcome data, case dispositions and offender demographic information. It will be administered by Eric Lambert, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice, and Matthew Leone, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Associate Director of the Grant Sawyer Center for Justice Studies. Once data availability

has been determined by the researchers, the research plan will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UNR for approval. The IRB's goal is to ensure that the research does no harm and that the data are de-identified and secured in a manner that assures the safety and privacy of the research subjects.

The objective of this research is to show how the school-to-prison pipeline might be constrained using unique, peer-driven, restorative justice programming as an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system. To date, there have been too few comprehensive examinations of the effectiveness of the youth court process. Research of this type is necessary to both show the effectiveness of such programming and to guide future changes in the youth court process.

If you are interested in having your program participate in this important study, please contact Karen Green, karengreen@peercourt.com; 916-663-1272. She will assist in connecting you with the project leaders and answer any of your questions.

- Free Roundtable Webinars are available on-line. On January 19, 2021, one was conducted entitled “How youth courts can assist schools in handling truancy and school discipline issues.” The purpose of this webinar and others to come will be provide education and training new peer court members for the year 2021-2022. They are free of charge, and we invite anyone and everyone with special interest in this arena to please visit them on our website (www.calyouthcourts.com). A very special thanks goes out to Don Carney and his crew for making these a reality. STAY TUNED FOR MORE!
- ALUMNI – CAYC continues its efforts to reach out to peer court alumni. If you have ever participated in any peer, youth or student court, not only in California but other states as well, we would love to hear from you. We are establishing a data base of alumni, so please feel free to go to our website and add your contact information. We will add you to the list and keep you informed on how we’re doing.
- STATE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD (SARB) – As a team, CAYC and SARB are continuing to strive together to combat school absenteeism. STAY TUNED FOR MORE GREAT NEWS ON THIS TOPIC.
- ANNUAL CAYC MEETING – If you would like to attend any of our meetings, please feel free to contact us either by phone at (916) 663-1272 or via email at inquiry@calyouthcourts.com.
- PEER COURT COORDINATOR DISCUSSION FORUM – **Youth Court Coordinator "Monthly Virtual Roundtables: (With Rotating Topics)". On Tuesday, January 19th, 3:00 - 4:30 pm** one was held entitled **Youth Courts addressing Truancy**. Our November virtual roundtable was on the topic of **"Sharing Innovations"**. Coordinators were able to meet each other in breakout sessions and share some of their most innovative projects within their youth court. Post-event evaluations revealed that one of the most valuable benefits of these roundtables is the ability to connect with other youth court coordinators and build a stronger connection. Join us! **If you have any questions, comments or inquiries, please feel free to contact organizer/coordinator, Sacha Marini @ hcteencourt@bgcredwoods.org. This is a FREE forum and no pre-registration is necessary.**
- CRITICAL OUTREACH – Not only has CAYC reached out to all California State Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, but Probation Chiefs as well to garner their support of CAYC and the peer court process. A copy of this newsletter will go out to these organizations on a regular basis. Once again, if you know any Chief, Sheriff or Probation administrator, please enlighten them about your involvement and encourage them to visit the CAYC website for more information.

Administration Committee

- BOARD MEMBER APPLICATIONS, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – CAYC has completed development and implementation of the following subject matters:
 - Duties and Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and Its Members;
 - Youth Advisory issues are currently under consideration

Fundraising/Marketing Committee

- GRANTS – CAYC is applying for several grants. If you become aware of any grant opportunity which may benefit youth, please furnish us details via email to inquiry@calyouthcourts.com.

- Since we are a private/non-profit organization we rely heavily on grants and other funding (private/corporate) sources. Please check out our website (www.calyouthcourts.com) and hit the link to subscribe and donate. Your tax-deductible donation will serve to help our program and today's youth.

***DONATE TODAY, KEEP CAYC STRONG
VISIT OUR WEBSITE – www.calyouthcourts.com***

***JOIN OUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NOW
SUBSCRIBE TODAY, FREE MEMBERSHIP***

BE SURE TO CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK, PINTEREST, AND TWITTER!

“LINKS” TO SUCCESS

BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS:

<https://sandyhookpromise.app.box.com/s/c6pdg1x4s3docyuo03din87ed782mj9z>

Teen Courts – Do They Work and Why?

<https://drj.fccourts.org/uploads/Teen%20Court%20Article.pdf>

WHY YOUTH COURT?

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15py645XH4M14n3WeXwziL-EDEn8uQ4jTp6i9oMbDShs/edit?usp=gmail&ts=5f62bdca>

YOUTH COURTS AND THE COMMISSION OF CIVIL RIGHTS:

<https://www.usccr.gov/press/2019/07-23-Beyond-Suspensions-Report-PR.pdf>

<https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2019/07-23-Beyond-Suspensions.pdf>

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Children and the Courts, Judicial Council of California



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION
of
YOUTH COURTS

"Justice for Youth by Youth"

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