



PRESS RELEASE

Tennessee Youth Courts
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Tennessee Youth Court Celebrates National Youth Justice Awareness Month

OCTOBER 12, 2016 – October 2016 has officially been proclaimed as [National Youth Justice Awareness Month](#). This month-long observance puts the spotlight on programs such as the **Davidson County Youth Court**, which is dedicated to preventing local youth from entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems and encourages Davidson County residents to participate in activities and programs that help youth fulfill their greatest potential.

Davidson County Youth Court is part of the **Tennessee Youth Courts (TYC)** program, which is celebrating 16 years of empowering teens to change their lives and the lives of other teens. According to TYC Executive Director Denise Bentley, “The program has the unique ability to serve as both prevention and intervention as students serve as attorneys, jurors and court clerks for fellow students who have committed minor crimes.”

TYC is teen driven and family focused. After teenage first-time offenders admit to the low-level offense with which they are charged, they are given the opportunity to have their peers determine their consequence or sentence. Peer decision-makers use **positive peer pressure and restorative justice**. The teen offenders are given the opportunity and responsibility for healing the harm their actions caused. Additionally, families are also involved in determining the consequence.

In his proclamation, the President said Congress must “increase protections for youth and limit the number of minors held in adult jails and prisons.” He

particularly cited programs, including those like TYC, that hold youth appropriately accountable, while improving their outcomes through prevention efforts, counseling, substance use disorder treatment, community-based alternatives to confinement, and screening youth for exposure to trauma.

After beginning within the Tennessee Bar Association in 2000, TYC began operating in January 2016 as a program under the umbrella of a non-profit with the same name, Tennessee Youth Courts Inc. This change in operations has enabled TYC to expand and serve even more youth throughout the state. In the past five years alone, the program has grown from nine youth court programs in nine counties to 26 programs in 19 counties. TYC programs have been successful in communities as large as Memphis and Nashville, but it has also found great success in other areas such as Lake and Sullivan counties.

Tennessee Youth Courts Inc. continues to focus on establishing and supporting youth courts throughout the state, as well as guiding local juvenile courts and community organizations that implement these innovative, highly effective programs.

Volunteers and donations are always needed. To volunteer or financially support Tennessee Youth Courts and Davidson County Youth Court, visit www.tnyouthcourts.org or email info@tnyouthcourts.org.

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