

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
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February 2007

The JAC Perspective



The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.

CALENDAR

Kids and Guns Committee

February 1
12:30 p.m.

Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex (formerly known as
Regional Service Center)
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

February 1
1:30 p.m.

Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex (formerly known as
Regional Service Center)
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Executive Board

February 7
1:30 p.m.

Southwest Florida Workforce
Development Board

Juvenile Sanctions Team

February 8
1:30 p.m.
Lee JAC



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Judge Fuller to Preside Over Juvenile Court

Beginning February 5th, the Honorable Joseph Fuller, Circuit Court Judge, will begin presiding over the Juvenile Court docket in Lee County. Judge Fuller will replace the Honorable Mark Steinbeck, who has presided over juvenile court since July of 2006 and will move to adult felony court. Judge Fuller was elected to the judiciary during the Fall 2006 election. Welcome, Judge Fuller!



Judge Joseph Fuller

Intake Diversion Program Holds Petit Theft Offenders Accountable

In Lee County, the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) Intake Diversion Program is one option utilized as a court diversion program for youth with retail petit theft charges. It is a voluntary program. A youth has to admit to the charges and have their parent's permission to participate. DJJ screens all arrested youth to determine which ones may qualify for the Intake Diversion Program. DJJ then makes a recommendation to the Office of the State Attorney to consider youth who may qualify for the Intake Diversion option. The State Attorney's Office decides whether to accept the recommendation or not. This is typically done within 48 hours after the arrest. According to Petrea Parrilla, the DJJ Juvenile Probation Officer who coordinates the Intake Diversion Program, youth in the program are normally required to perform 8 hours of community service, write a letter of apology to the victim, and write a 500 word essay or make a poster about what they have learned from the experience. (In addition to these sanctions, many stores require youth to pay



Petrea Parrilla coordinates the DJJ Intake Diversion Program

civil fines of several hundred dollars.) Sanctions must be completed prior to the youth's scheduled court date for an arraignment hearing. Once the State Attorney's Office has been notified that the youth has completed his/her sanctions, the case is removed from the court docket and the youth is excused from the court date. If a youth does not complete the sanctions, the case is returned to the Office of the State Attorney for judicial action. However, Parrilla noted (continued page 2)

Drug House Odyssey 2007

Use of illicit substances is considered by some youth to be a victimless crime. Drug House Odyssey (DHO) shows otherwise. Recommended for youth ages 10 and up, DHO is a dramatization about choices facing many of today's youth. The audience walks from scene to scene, following a scenario of youth making choices about substance use and the consequences that befall them based upon their choices. At times graphic, at times tragic, the consequences portrayed at DHO are quite sobering to most participants. Many of the actors at DHO are men and women who reenact what they do for a living every day – law enforcement, justice professionals,

fire and rescue teams, emergency medical teams, medical examiner, and clergy. They make a commitment of their time to DHO because they have seen first hand the victims of substance abuse. Visiting DHO with youth and discussing it with them afterwards provides one more tool that parents, teachers, scout leaders, church group leaders, and others concerned about youth can utilize to drive home that choices have consequences. The event can provide an opportunity for discussion with youth about values, handling peer pressure, and about the importance of finding healthy alternatives to substance use. This year Drug House Odyssey



Scene from Drug House Odyssey 2006

will be open to the general public on March 21, 22, and 23 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Tours will run approximately every 15 minutes. It will be held at Cape Christian Fellowship at 2110 Chiquita Blvd. in Cape Coral.

Intake Diversion (cont. from page 1)

that youth rarely fail to complete the program. The majority of cases are completed within three weeks. The program has handled 136 cases since it began in May 2006.



The JAC welcomes Deputy Scott Thompson, who will be coordinating a new civil citation program with the LCSO. Deputy Thompson previously worked out of the LCSO West District.

Apology Letter from a Participant in the Intake Diversion Program

Dear *(name of store omitted)*:

I am writing this letter to inform the store as well as the store's employees and associates of my apologies and regrets resulting from my wrongdoings at the store. I am truly sorry for my attempted shoplifting from your store on *(date omitted)*. I know that it was a wrong and irresponsible thing to do. I have also realized that it was a bad choice and judgement at my age of seventeen, and since I will soon be considered an adult once I turn eighteen, it was not an adult thing to do. Despite my poor judgement, I am still somewhat glad I was able to learn my lesson early before I move into adulthood, so I can further allow myself to progress and learn from my mistakes. I hope you will forgive me and know that I learned a valuable lesson from this.

Sincerely,

(name of youth omitted)