

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 344-5100
www.swfjac.org

February 2010

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

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Executive Board

February 3
1:30 p.m.
Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board
9530 Marketplace Rd., Ste. 104
Fort Myers

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

February 4
1:30 p.m.
Justice Center Annex
Sixth Floor, Courtroom A
Fort Myers

Prevention Network

February 12
10:00 a.m.
Fort Myers Police Training Facility
1803 Golf View Avenue
Fort Myers

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**344-5161
or 344-5171**

when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC.

Question "Too Good to be True" Pricing

If a youth shows up with a new item and says he or she bought it from a friend at a price that seems too good to be true, it may be time for his or her parents, teachers, or other adults to get curious and ask some questions. It may also be a good time to talk to the youth about laws regarding possessing and receiving stolen property. Youth burglaries have been on the rise in Lee County this past year, particularly with youth breaking into cars and stealing what is inside. Some of the youth sell the stolen items to others. Many youth do not know that, if they buy or accept stolen property and are aware that it is stolen, it is a crime. The law does not

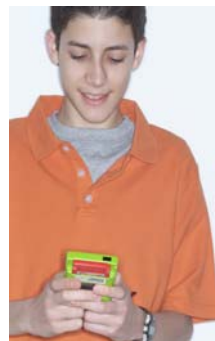


let one off the hook easily for not being "aware" whether the property was stolen. According to Florida law, if someone purchases stolen property at a price substantially below the fair market value, unless satisfactorily explained, it can be inferred that the person buying the property *should have known* that the property had been stolen. Talk to youth about stopping to think, if the price seems too good to be true, they should consider

whether the deal is legitimate. If they purchase stolen property, they would be encouraging someone to steal again. It may not be such a bargain if it potentially has criminal consequences for them.

Video Game Addiction?

Addiction is most often associated with substances such as alcohol or drugs, but there is growing evidence that, for some youth, playing video games can become an addiction in the same sense that compulsive gambling is considered an addiction. A 2009 study from Iowa State University found that 8.5% of youth who play video games show some signs of behavioral addiction. Four times as many boys as girls had what researchers called "pathological symptoms" related to video game playing. Spending too much time playing video games may seem relatively harmless compared to the dangers of a drug overdose. For most youth there is



no harm in playing video games. Spending a lot of time playing video games does not necessarily qualify as an addiction. However, for a small percentage of youth, video gaming can become so compulsive that it can impair functioning in other aspects of their lives. For these youth, video gaming can "take over" their lives so that they take no time to socialize, do homework, engage in hobbies, play sports, or for other age appropriate activities. They essentially miss out on normal social development. Some youth may not take time to eat or sleep. For older individuals it can threaten jobs or relationships. Pathological symptoms include:
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Video Game Addiction? (cont.)

- Spending increasing amounts of time and money on video games to feel the same level of excitement;
- Exhibiting withdrawal symptoms, such as, restlessness, irritability, anger, depression or violence, if play is scaled back;
- Using video gaming to escape from everyday problems, anxiety or depression;
- Lying about the length of time spent playing or to hide gaming activity, and
- Stealing money or games to support their gaming habit.

Children whom researchers considered to be pathological gamers reported compulsively thinking about playing, even when doing other things. They had poorer grades in school and had more trouble paying

attention in class than those without pathological symptoms. Research has not sorted out the degree to which excessive video gaming may cause associated problems or whether some children who have the associated problems tend to engage in more excessive video gaming. Experts suggest that parents monitor their child's video gaming to make sure it is not interfering with other aspects of the youth's life. If parents are concerned that their child may be addicted to video gaming, they suggest that they not dismiss it as a phase. The child probably needs help in getting more balance in his or her life and may need to learn new coping skills to deal with some other aspects of their life.

Trends in Juvenile Arrests

The JAC received 4,715 arrested youth in 2009. This includes youth who were arrested multiple times and youth who screened as eligible for secure detention from Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry Counties.

Total Arrests and Top Charges of Arrested Youth at the Lee JAC

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Change*
Total Arrests	4,672	5,028	5,025	5,310	4,715	-11%
Burglary	550	847	633	661	842	+27%
Larceny Petit Theft	629	527	719	687	625	-9%
Larceny	403	376	284	506	417	-18%
Assault/Battery	336	334	321	356	326	-8%
Misdemeanor Marijuana	258	318	306	335	249	-26%
Resisting Arrest w/o Violence	218	207	226	244	240	-2%
Vandalism/Criminal Mischief	153	217	255	167	199	+19%
Loitering & Prowling	137	159	204	185	188	+2%
Disturbing the Peace	83	95	110	111	139	+25%
Auto Theft	151	212	107	74	82	+11%

* Percent change from 2008 to 2009

Second Chance for The Bridge



Last month's newsletter reported that The Bridge youth center had closed. Thanks to a very generous donation, The Bridge will reopen and operate for another year. The target date for reopening is March 5th. The program will move back to its original location at 2128 Cleveland Avenue at the foot of the Caloosahatchee Bridge. The building will need to be refurbished before it can reopen. The program has asked for donations of commodes (2), a urinal, bathroom sinks (2), a kitchen sink, a kitchen countertop, a glass cooler, a freezer, security cameras, drywall, wood, paint, a large dumpster, landscaping items, and bar stools for the concession area. Volunteers are needed for cabinet repair, plumbing, electrical work, exterminating, moving, cleaning, and sorting. Financial support is also still needed. For more information, contact Melissa Terry, The Bridge Director, at 239-337-3798.



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.