

Good Evening and Welcome to Youth/Peer Court. My name is _____ and I'm the clerk of the court tonight.

Please let me know when I call your name if you are present.

read names. Thank you.

Youth/Peer Court is a program of the Youth Violence Prevention Council, and was founded in 1996 as a response to a rising gang problem in Shasta County.

In the mid 90s there were less than a hundred youth courts in the nation. This has grown to allow for approximately 1300 peer courts. In 2003 the Youth Violence Prevention Council started the Youth/Peer Court in Redding.

Youth courts are the fastest growing **diversionary** program in the United States. Diversion means that the youth are taken out of the juvenile justice system and upon successful completion their record is cleared.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that kids who get involved in the Juvenile Justice System come out worse for the wear.

Youth courts, such as ours, understand that teens make mistakes but we also believe that a single mistake should not ruin one's life. Youth coming through our program are given the benefit of a restorative justice sentence.

The hope is that by completing the sanctions given to them by a jury of their peers they will be more responsible for their actions and thus, less likely to reoffend.

Tonight we'll be having a master jury with two juries. This means that the first case(s) will go in front of the first jury. After they are done that jury will go out to deliberate and the second jury will come in to hear the next case(s).

Specifically, it will work like this:

- The judge will come in and speak to the audience.
- Then he or she will address the parents, asking them to help their child complete his/her dispositions.
- The judge will ask you to stand up in front of the jury so that any juror who knows you or is unable to be impartial can be taken off the jury.
- Once the jury is sworn in, then the first case will be called up.
- When your name is called, please stand and walk up to the clerk to get sworn in. (*demonstrate this*).
- When the judge asks you to introduce your parents, please say their names, not just "mom or dad"
- Sit and answer the jury's questions.

To those of you here for court tonight I have some tips:

1. Sit Up
2. Speak up
3. Please use appropriate court language such as yes or no instead of "ya" or "nah"
4. Be honest (teens tend to know when other teens are lying)
5. Address the judge as "your honor", "sir" or "ma'am"

Do you have any questions? We will get started shortly.