**Volunteering at Teen Court**

Most teens that have experienced the juvenile justice system have felt it from the very inside. Most teens have not already served in a court to other teens. Most teens don’t have the slightest idea what teen court *is.* Most teens aren’t familiar with the concept of restorative justice. But I am not most teens.

My name is Alexandra R, I will be 14 in December. I am attending NPA (Northcoast preparatory academy) and am in Freshman year. I have been working with teen court for a little over half of a year. However, the values that I have taken from it and those that others have are beyond what many think can be achieved in six months.

I began teen court because I knew that it would give me good experience with the justice system, get me community service hours, and look good on my resume. I no longer do teen court soly for these reasons. I continue to do teen court because defending someone my age who made a mistake and having them leave the program with more positivity in their lives makes me truly happy. I enjoy helping clients get the best sentence they can for their situation. When a client gets back on their feet with the help of teen court, the pride and accomplishment I feel for them is remarkable.

The Humboldt County teen court community is truy abundant with teens overflowing with ideas and working overtime just for the joy of helping others. As someone who has been a client attorney, community attorney, clerk, judge, and juror, I have put many hours of my time as well as ideas into this program. I have no doubt stayed up late to finish my court case, or spent an hour talking to a client, etc.. This all comes to show that I, as well as many other teen court volunteers, are willing to work extra for a program simply because we are passionate about it.

With these things in mind, one must understand that teen court has to have foundational rules simply so that it does not turn to chaos. Teen court’s ground-level idea is restorative justice. Built upon that are many levels that all go hand-in-hand, but restorative justice is the reason that teen court exists. Restorative justice in its simplest form is a type of justice that aims to help rehabilitate and reconstruct the offenders’ bonds with the community and/or victim(s). Re-establishing these offenders’ bonds with the outer society is very essential to helping them live a happy and free life. Without this, the delinquents end up unemployed, homeless, or other. Restorative justice is very important for people of all ages but it is key for juveniles as teenagers are still growing,

To conclude, teen court has changed many people for the greater good. Though a multitude of teens (including me) start teen court for alternative reasons, quite a few end up continuing with it because it makes them happy to help others. Seeing this kind of effect on teens is truly inspirational. This is why I volunteer with teen court.