



# MEMORANDUM

---

**PHONE:** 452-5379; 2834

**DATE:** June 29, 2011

**TO:** Parks & Community Services Board

**FROM:** Terry Smith, Assistant Director  
Helena Stephens, Community Services Manager

**SUBJECT:** Bellevue Youth Court (*Information only*)

---

Tonight's presentation is intended to provide an overview of the Bellevue Youth Court Program.

In 2003, the Youth Link Board selected the implementation of a Youth Court Program as a top priority and introduced the youth court concept to the City Council in 2007. Youth Link identified an appropriate youth court model; secured jurisdiction agreements and implemented guidelines, trainings and services to provide a civic education program for youth and an alternative judicial program for juvenile offenders in Bellevue.

## **BACKGROUND**

Youth Link researched and reviewed youth court programs that would best serve the teen population in Bellevue. The review of national and local youth court programs yielded more than 1500 youth/teen court systems throughout the United States, with 30 youth/teen courts located in Washington State. Youth/teen courts include school (tobacco, truancy, detention and moot), traffic and criminal courts.

The establishment of Bellevue Youth Court serves first and primarily, second-time juvenile criminal offenders and is based on a youth court model developed in Whatcom County. Whatcom County's "Teen Court" is a partnership between Whatcom County Superior Court and Northwest Youth Services and adjudicates juveniles who plead guilty to a second criminal offense. In addition to the adjudication, youth court programs provide juvenile offenders with services required to make significant behavioral changes and often engages youth to make peer changes leading to individual success.

On the average, Bellevue's teen population are involved in 74 felony and 178 misdemeanor cases per year and cases are filed in the King County Juvenile Court system. Depending on the severity of the crime, most first-time juvenile offenders participate in the Bellevue Diversion program. Bellevue diversions range between 200-250 cases per year. Bellevue Youth Court is designed to impact juveniles who are at the crossroads of positive or negative behavior patterns. With the completion of court research; legal authorizations and partnership agreements, Bellevue Youth Court opened January 2008. The program completed its court calendar for the fourth year in May 2011.

## **BELLEVUE YOUTH COURT**

The Bellevue Youth Court serves as an option of the diversion program of King County Juvenile Court, while providing a meaningful court experience for youth offenders charged with misdemeanors. The City of Bellevue and King County collaboratively provide program oversight. The Youth Court is an established and authorized court, which provides sentencing hearings to Bellevue youth, who have committed and pled guilty to second divertible offenses. The program's criteria require that the criminal offense occurred within the Bellevue city limits and/or committed by a youth residing in Bellevue. Youth Court targets middle and high school students serving as court volunteers to adjudicate youth offenders. Students volunteering for Bellevue Youth Court attend private, public, and/or home schools in the Bellevue School District radius and receive community service hours.

Bellevue Youth Court is one of two second-time offender courts in Washington State. The program is funded by the City of Bellevue and authorized by King County Superior Court. The program utilizes 25-30 youth per court session as youth court volunteers. Students work with attorneys, judges and court professionals throughout the year and are trained to serve as youth judges, jurors, bailiffs, clerks, and prosecuting and defense advocates (attorneys). Youth volunteers are required to attend extensive trainings, averaging between 8-16 hours of specialized court education per year.

The primary objectives of Bellevue Youth Court include:

- Introduction of civic responsibility to Bellevue youth and teens regarding the King County Juvenile Court System.
- Provide opportunities for Bellevue youth to participate in the Youth Court program
- Motivate youth to take responsibility for reducing the number of teens engaged in the juvenile justice system.
- Reduce Bellevue youth recidivism rates by supporting judicial education and civic accountability.
- Recognize and celebrate the impact of Bellevue's youth community on civic engagement and social responsibility.
- Provide an array of social services to assist youth offenders in their current situation and foster a series of activities (counseling; education; community interaction) that deters continued negative behavior and promotes positive and well-supported, positive actions.

The Bellevue Youth Court presentation will include members of the Bellevue Youth Court Management Team – Judge Carol Schapira, one of two superior court judges assigned to Bellevue Youth Court and Leila Curtis, a King County attorney and truancy court coordinator; two youth members - Will Badart and Rahul Harikrishnan, who have served in several youth court roles and Helena Stephens, Bellevue Youth Court program manager.