

Proclamation



Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

WHEREAS, the Thirteenth Judicial Court of Hillsborough County in Tampa, Florida is a state court and trial court, and primarily handles civil cases greater in controversial value of \$15,000, felony criminal cases, and appeals from the county court, and its mission is to foster an environment for the accessible, efficient, and effective administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, the Thirteenth Judicial Court of Hillsborough County's Juvenile Diversion Program was established to reduce recidivism or relapse and divert youth from a progressive involvement in the criminal justice system, and it aspires to promote youth accountability and personal development, requiring that juveniles accept responsibility for their behavior and consequences for their actions by a jury of their peers; and

WHEREAS, the Juvenile Diversion Program's Teen Court was founded under the leadership of Chief Judge F. Dennis Alvarez, with the premise that if peers can be a negative influence, they can also provide a positive influence, and the first Teen Court hearing occurred twenty-five years ago on March 15, 1990; and

WHEREAS, Teen Court, which uses a Grand Jury format, offers first time juvenile offenders, ages 13-18, an alternative to formal court processing in juvenile court, and student volunteers from middle and high school levels serve as jurors who determine a verdict, act as defense and prosecution attorneys, and adult pro bono attorneys serve as Teen Court Judges; and

WHEREAS, the youth referred to Teen Court are given the opportunity to have their cases heard by the teen jurors with a sanctioned contract developed by the teen jury, and the student volunteers receive training and mentoring by pro bono attorneys and Juvenile Diversion Program staff on court proceedings including presenting cases and asking questions of the defendant; and

WHEREAS, countless community service hours have been performed by Juvenile Diversion Program's Teen Court volunteers and pro bono attorneys have generously given of their time and expertise, and the program has made a life-altering impact on many of our youth over the years.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bob Buckhorn, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Tampa, Florida, do hereby proclaim March 15-21, 2015 as

"TEEN COURT WEEK"

in the City of Tampa, Florida, and encourage all citizens to join me in congratulating the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court's Juvenile Diversion Program's Teen Court on this milestone 25th Anniversary, and in thanking the student volunteers and pro bono attorneys for their dedication in assuring that the youth in our community are afforded opportunities to lead productive, positive and responsible lives.

Dated in Tampa, Florida, this 22nd day of February, 2015.



City of
Tampa
Florida

Bob Buckhorn

Mayor