

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 867

By DeBerry

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Tennessee Youth Courts, Inc., on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Tennessee Court Act of 2000.

WHEREAS, the Teen Court Act of 2000 brought about a diversionary program that has been successfully administered for twenty years for the benefit of both the youth volunteers who are the driving force of these programs and the juvenile first-offenders who gain a second chance as a result of the program; and

WHEREAS, the Teen Court Act of 2000, and the program it made available for the improvement of age-appropriate access to justice for juveniles, brought about the establishment of Tennessee Youth Courts, Inc., the statewide nonprofit that provides and supports this diversionary program, which enables youth to advocate for their peers and learn about civics, the juvenile justice system, and restorative justice; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Youth Courts, Inc., empowers teenagers to significantly impact the lives of their peers, reducing the likelihood that the juvenile offender will commit another offense; and

WHEREAS, currently ten programs are operating across the State and are located in Blount County, Crockett County, Davidson County, Hamilton County, Lake County, Madison County, Marshall County, Shelby County, Sumner County, Wilson County, the City of Bristol, and Memphis; and

WHEREAS, counties that have approved a youth court program that are not yet operational include Cheatham, Maury, and White counties; Montgomery County is in the process of relaunching its program, and Dickson, Grainger, and Robertson counties have expressed serious interest in the program; and

WHEREAS, pioneers of juvenile justice reform, judges have adopted youth/teen court programs as part of a line of graduated sanctions as well as an initial step toward eliminating disproportionate minority contact; and

WHEREAS, the program is volunteer driven and family focused, with a recidivism rate of less than four percent statewide for the last five years; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Youth Courts, Inc., benefits from the experience and wisdom of the members of its statewide Board of Directors, which provides leadership and direction; it also boasts more than 2,400 lawyers and legal services professionals who volunteer annually; and

WHEREAS, the program was an initiative of the Tennessee Bar Association, its initial host; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Tennessee Youth Courts, Inc., on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the passage of the Teen Court Act of 2000 and extend our best wishes for every future success in carrying out the intention of the Teen Court Act statute.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.