



April 7, 2016

Oklahoma Bar Foundation
PO Box 53036
Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3036

RE: TEEN COURT

Dear Oklahoma Bar Foundation:

It is a privilege to write you today in support of Teen Court. I was in junior high school the first time I was exposed to Teen Court. Teen Court Director, Marcia Frazier, brought a group of high school students to my school to do mock trial. I watched intently as the teen volunteer attorneys presented their case. After closing arguments, I tried to decide for myself who won. I think I picked the defense. For me, it was probably the most memorable and exciting school assembly I attended in junior high school.

I got involved with the program in 1999. My mother signed me up for the program while I was visiting relatives over summer break. I was really excited. In the beginning, I sat on the jury for a number of hearings before Ms. Frazier asked me if I would be interested in attending a Teen Court attorney training program. Of course, she knew my answer before she asked the question. I wanted to be an advocate, just like the students I saw back in junior high school. The training was conducted by now Comanche County District Judge Emmit Tayloe.

After high school, I attended Cameron University. I would occasionally visit Teen Court as an observer, and to say hello and catch up with old friends. I volunteered as a Teen Court judge on numerous occasions. And in 2005, I was appointed to the Teen Court Board of Directors.

Teen Court is a program with so much to offer our youth. Besides the obvious benefits of allowing first-time juvenile offenders to be heard and judged by their peers, Teen Court is a program which fosters growth in its participants. Participants learn about the law and the judicial process; they get to meet and interact with other kids from other high schools in the area on a weekly basis; they build friendships; volunteer attorneys learn to think quickly; they meet local members of the bar who they look up to; and they are exposed to real cases with real consequences. Teen Court solidified my aspiration of becoming an attorney.

I attained my goal several years later and now practice in Northeastern Pennsylvania. While I do not represent teenagers in criminal cases, I do represent parents in dependency actions and work daily at reuniting families that have been broken apart due to drug use, mental health issues, or abuse and neglect. In my opinion, Teen Court has always been about families.

I don't know of another program that our youth can be a part of that has a more profound effect on their future.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. LaMonica', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Carlo A. LaMonica, Esq.