

STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TRUANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM



January 2017

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Truancy Prevention Program (TPP) Fall Semester 2016 Report

School partners: 17 middle schools
Students enrolled in TPP: 156 middle school students
Students that successfully completed TPP: 83 students (53.2%)
Students that improved in reducing truancy : 120 students (76.9%)
Volunteers that served: 41
 Community Volunteers: 15
 High School Student Volunteers: 2
 Montgomery County Police Department Officers: 13
 State Attorney's Office Law Fellows and Interns: 11

The State's Attorney welcomes volunteers to the Truancy Prevention Program

Mr. John McCarthy welcomed volunteers during the Orientation and Training held at the State's Attorney's Office in September 2016.

The numbers are stunning. Mr. McCarthy told the group of volunteers that there are 6.5 million truants in the United States, and approximately 8,000-9,000 of those children are in Montgomery County. This program, he explained, is a creative way to avoid the use of the jail system. The good news, according to Mr. McCarthy, is that juvenile crime rate in Montgomery County has decreased by 70%.

"It is not about assessing blame," he stressed, but rather an attempt to "change human behavior" which is the program's biggest challenge. It is through the volunteers' compassion, kindness, and their roles as meaningful adults, that provide the anchor and hope to many school children. Mr. McCarthy assures the volunteers that two out of three students in the program are likely to improve both attendance and academic performance. The State's Attorney also pointed out that the Truancy Prevention Program is a classic early intervention program. It is an attempt to provide pathways that lead children away from risky behavior, drug use and jail. He said he was happy that the program is able to tap the many talents of Montgomery County's community members.

Ms. Laura Chase, Deputy State's Attorney, was also at the Training, to express her gratitude to the volunteers. Other than making the children understand the importance of attendance, she spoke about helping the kids help themselves as one of the program's most important focus. Ms. Lynda Earle, the Program's most experienced facilitator, told the group of volunteers that one of the goals is to uplift the children, and to bring out their potential. She emphasized on focusing on the positive, making the children believe that they can always make things better. In concluding, Ms. Earle advised, "allow the children to inspire you."

HAPPY NEW YEAR

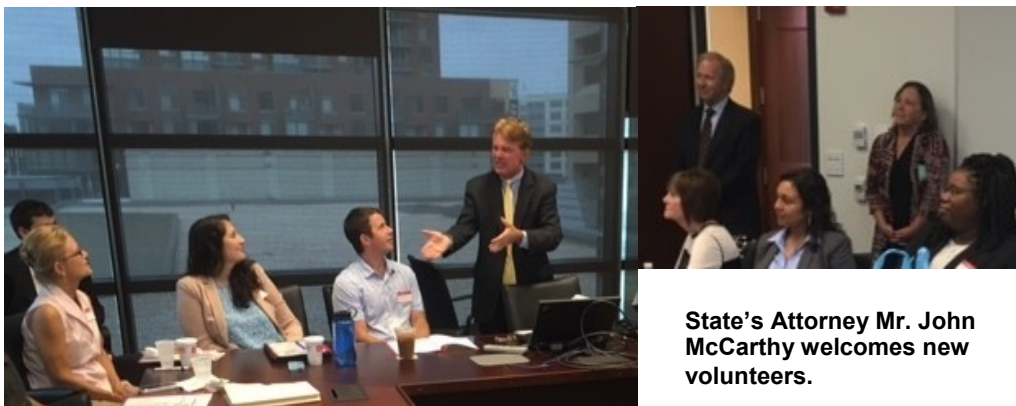
Time is not measured by
the years that we live. But
by the deeds that we do
and the joys that we give.

- Helen Steiner Rice

THANK YOU Fall Semester 2016 TPP VOLUNTEERS

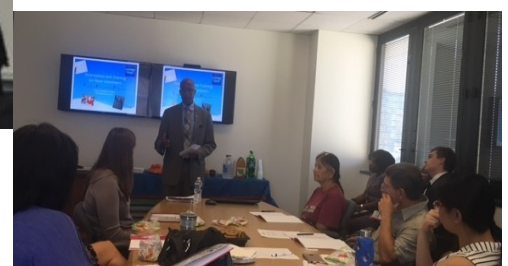
Alan Lipschultz
Alessandra Portillo
Amishi Sabnis
Almudena Diaz
Hanna Vohra
Harold Wooten
Loraine Santo
Mady Nadje
Mamta Rajan
Michael Gruenberg
Nicole Griffith
Sara Yassin
Terry Irwin
Terry Melo
Victoria Hamilton
Ben Assefa
Ebuka Osinach
Daniel Lechner
Elizabeth Chadha
Gabriella Vazzana

Jaime Jacobson
Nick Schaufelberger
Rachel Jiang
Sandy Selman
Tam Pham
Taylor Jones
Trevor Addie
Xavier Audick
Ofc. Bobby Blackmon
Ofc. Cynthia DeFriece
Ofc. Diane H.-Neal
Ofc. Joseph Lowery
Ofc. Kristie Palmer
Ofc. Marcus Dixon
Ofc. Melissa Coligan
Ofc. Michael Prather
Ofc. Percell Gregory
Ofc. Russell Larson
Ofc. Shate Jackson
Ofc. Steven Pascalli
Ofc. Wayne Wiltshire



State's Attorney Mr. John McCarthy welcomes new volunteers.

Phil Andrews, Laura Chase and George Simms describe how the Truancy Prevention Program plays a role in effecting change in our community.



Noteworthy Stories:



A student who took part in the TPP this fall semester was experiencing significant attendance issues coupled with the fact that her home caught on fire. This fire displaced the student and her family. Despite the obstacles faced with moving from home to home, while waiting for a stable home, this child made it a point to attend school every day and on time. Not only did this child's attendance improve, while being displaced, this child's grades improved as well. The student's demeanor also was noticeably more positive. The entire TPP team (SAO, volunteers, and school staff) reiterated to the student to persevere despite life's challenges. One of the student's teachers attended a TPP session just to share that she noticed the student has made a huge turn around and that she is proud of the student. It is not very often a teacher attends a TPP session during school hours in order to commend a student's efforts. Fortunately, the student and her family were connected to temporary housing and the student kept up the positive grades.

This demonstrates what can happen when positive encouragement, support, and communication align.

— Contributed by **Rexanah Wyse, Program Manager**

A sixth grade student enrolled in the Truancy Prevention Program was tardy 48 times in the past school year. While in the program however, she had not missed a day of school nor has ever been late. The student made it to honor roll! Although she successfully completed the program, her father would like her to remain in this reward based program for other benefits the program brings, such as organizational skills, positive reinforcement, and mentoring.

— Contributed by **Joseph Hooks, Site Coordinator**

When the student I was mentoring first started in the program, she didn't seem too sure of herself and was reluctant to open up and talk, and it broke my heart because she is so intelligent and so kind, and I wanted her to believe in herself. But each week, I can see that more and more, she is recognizing her accomplishments and that she should be proud of herself because she is working hard in all her classes, getting really strong grades. As the sessions progressed, she has definitely opened up more. She even mentioned to me that the program has just further motivated her to keep coming to school and getting her work done which I think is great, she definitely seems to feel a sense of responsibility and I think she is extremely motivated to keep up the good work.

— Contributed by **Hanna Vohra, Volunteer Mentor**

We asked our students what they learned from the Truancy Prevention Program. Here's what they said:

I learned

- to do my absolute best to succeed in school, and to go to college, and to be the best person I can possibly be.
- how to have a schedule and a plan.
- that attendance is important and if you ever miss even one or two days of school, that could drastically drop your grades.
- to ask more questions, be more involved, work harder, and wake up on time!
- that being late can actually affect your grades.
- that coming to school affects your grades positively.
- to keep trying and never give up.
- that you should never give up on yourself and that if you put your mind to it, you will get there.
- to value going to school and to not think bad of teachers.
- that going to school is important and that it affects your future.

I learned

- many strategies to keep on getting to school on time.
- to get motivated and not give up.
- to care for others.
- that it is good to share your thoughts with adults and teachers.
- how to stay more organized.
- to give it your all, hope you can make it, and if you fail, try again until you get it right.
- that I have to attend school to get somewhere.
- that it is important to attend school to be someone in life.
- to get up on time.
- that I should finish and turn in my work on time.
- that no matter how bad my grades are, I can always do better.
- that if I try, I will succeed, and that teachers are always there to help.

I learned

- to raise my hand and be confident, and talking to my teachers and asking for help.
- that you need to get out of your comfort zone and try harder.
- to take my attendance and academics more seriously.
- that education is a powerful weapon and no one can take it from you.
- that the more you go to school the better the grades.
- not to avoid school when I don't want to attend and to wake-up on time.
- to work hard and do good things.
- that no matter what, try to make it to school on time and it will be worth it.
- to keep up with everything and stay on top.

As the TPP Fall semester 2016 comes to a successful end, we eagerly anticipate the start of another fulfilling collaboration with our TPP partners this upcoming spring semester 2017. We also look forward to welcoming our NEW volunteers to our Orientation/Training to be held on January 26, 2017. We thank each and everyone of them

for choosing to commit to our 10-week Truancy Prevention Program beginning this January. We also thank all the schools we partner with and their staff for their patience and cooperation. And to all the volunteers who chose to continue to serve our middle schoolers this spring, a SPECIAL THANKS!

TPP Spring 2017

What to expect?

2 NEW schools this spring semester, bringing our total Montgomery County Public School partners to 19.

A partnership between Excel Beyond the Bell's Homework Club and the TPP's The Learning Zone (TLZ) tutoring program.



THINK ABOUT IT

FALL 2016

TPP volunteers completed 730.15 hours of service working with 156 middle school children. At the established non-profit industry rate of \$23.17/hour of volunteer service, that is a total of \$16,898.64 in investment towards the success of the children in our community.

The SAO TPP Team:

George Simms. Assistant State's Attorney, head of Community Outreach Unit. TPP Facilitator in 3 schools.

Phil Andrews. Co-leads the Community Outreach Unit with George. Director of Crime Prevention Initiatives. TPP Facilitator in 3 schools.

Diana Plazas. Joined the TPP Team in the summer of 2016 as Assistant TPP Coordinator. Diana serves in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

Joseph Hooks. Assistant TPP Coordinator. Joseph serves in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

Lynda Earle. Assistant State's Attorney. TPP Facilitator in 3 schools.

Rexanah Wyse. Assistant State's Attorney and TPP's Program Manager. Rexanah serves in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

Yasmine Eleazar. Volunteer Maryland Coordinator and TLZ Coordinator.

Volunteer feedback:

The children in this program are a joy to work with and I look forward to seeing them every week. - *mentor, Sligo MS*

The TPP Volunteer Experience has been very good. I am very satisfied with the program. The program has definitely helped me appreciate the variety of situations that some students face.

-*tutor, Francis Scott Key MS*

Thank you very much for the opportunity to work with these kids even if it proved to be very challenging. I would like you to know that I believe that this is a worth while endeavor. -*tutor, Roberto Clemente MS*

I especially love when they get excited about their attendance and when they are improving in different classes or how excited they are about a science experiment they are working on. I love seeing how motivated they have become and how they feel accountable for school, and I think they are all working so hard, so I'm glad it reflects in how they feel about school and just how they feel about themselves.

-*mentor, Sligo MS and Silver Spring International MS*

I look forward to waking up on Wednesday mornings to go and talk with the children about being successful in school and in all that they do to achieve the best possible results and outcomes in all life brings them. I have noticed many kids behavior has changed and I believe the TPP program is a big part of it. -*mentor, Parkland MS*

On the whole, our group of students are a mix of those who have exhibited truancy concerns and those who are in major life transitions (moving from out of state, out of country, etc.), and quite a few of them seem to very much use us as the resource and support we are intended to be. -*mentor, Ridgeview MS*

One of my most memorable students is a young lady who comes in and she is all attitude at first, but once you ask her the right questions, she just opens up and is really looking for guidance. Amidst all the drama she believes she has in life, she is just looking for someone to talk to who will listen to her and after coming to each session where she's allowed to unburden herself, she usually leaves very happy.

-*mentor, Forest Oak MS*

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience because I feel that the easiest way to combat crime is through educating the youth and familiarizing them with the justice system and its agents. The tutoring aspect of the program is a fantastic resource with so many benefits that targets students in the most need. Most significantly, it has been great to see the students' actual desire to change their situations, getting to know them personally, and getting to help them closely, typically one-on-one setting. This not only allows us, as tutors, to address the particular educational needs of each student, but also to develop bonds with the students that make it easier to ameliorate their overall situation.

-*tutor, Julius West MS*

Please stay in touch and spread the word: The Truancy Prevention Program needs mentors, site coordinators and tutors for the 2016-2017 school year.

Contact Yasmine Eleazar for questions, feedback and suggestions. Call tel. (240) 777-7501, or email: yasmine.eleazar@montgomerycountymd.gov