

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Reach For Youth, Inc. Launches In-School Teen Court Program
with Funding from Lilly Endowment***

INDIANAPOLIS- With September being National Youth Court month, Reach For Youth, Inc. is delighted to announce it has been awarded over \$400,000 in funding from Lilly Endowment, the Indianapolis Foundation and the Clowes Fund collectively to support an in-school model of the successful Teen Court program. With consent and involvement from the parent, Teen Court in school allows students who may be on the verge of out of school suspension or expulsion to receive a second chance by bringing their case to a jury of their peers who decide on the consequences for their offense. Teen Court offenders have already admitted guilt; the process is to determine the consequences owed the school community for their offense. Consequences can include community service, verbal and written apologies, attending educational workshops, written research papers and volunteering to serve as Teen Court jury members on future cases, which are determined by students of the school who volunteer their time as jury members and attorneys..

Decatur Middle School has partnered with Reach For Youth since the 2009-2010 school year to bring the innovative discipline model to the school. The impact is great for students and administration alike, providing a constructive tool to address behavior problems and preventing the loss of valuable class time that occurs in more punitive measures such as out of school suspensions.

“We are always looking for ways to address behavior issues in a positive way to enhance the school community,” says Sandy Feely, Vice Principal of Decatur Middle School. “Teen Court is a great opportunity for students to have a voice at their school. They are thoughtful and thorough in deciding what their fellow classmates must do to repay the school community for their offense. In most cases, the ‘defendants’ don’t experience any further major discipline issues for the remainder of the school year.”

PHOTO/INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

WHEN: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 3 P.M.

WHERE: DECATUR MIDDLE SCHOOL, ROOM 209

5108 S. HIGH SCHOOL RD., INDIANAPOLIS

WHAT: JURY TRAINING FOR TEEN COURT VOLUNTEERS

The private funding for the in-school model of Teen Court will enable schools to bring the Teen Court program to their schools and facilitate training, data tracking and volunteer information through an interactive web portal. Schools will have their own site they can access to take advantage of resources for their own program. The Reach For

Youth staff will help interested schools organize and facilitate their programs for the initial launch of the in-school model until the web site is fully developed and accessible.

Reach For Youth has facilitated the traditional Teen Court program in Central Indiana for over 20 years. Serving as a diversion program for the Marion and Johnson County Juvenile Probation Departments, youth who receive a second chance through Teen Court have their case heard by a jury of their peers and once they complete the assigned consequences successfully, walk away with a clean record. The in-school model of Teen Court was developed to provide creative solutions to discipline issues that often result in out of school suspensions or habitual offenses that interrupt the learning environment.

“Teen Court in its traditional format has been a great success for young defendants and volunteers alike,” says Reach For Youth CEO Michelle Study-Campbell. “September is National Youth Court month, and what better way to mark it than to expand this effective program to more youth in Central Indiana. By bringing Teen Court to the school communities, we hope to provide a preventive tool to address behavior problems before they escalate to the level of criminal activity. Giving students every opportunity to remain in school and learn from their actions is going to help them be more successful throughout their academic career.”

Reach For Youth, Inc.

Reach For Youth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization established in 1974 by a coalition of south-side Indianapolis community leaders concerned about the lack of services and programs in their neighborhood. Today we serve nearly 1500 youth and their families from Central Indiana, regardless of ability to pay. Our services include providing Teen Court programs, counseling intervention for at-risk youth who are facing expulsion, and programs designed to address other serious behavioral issues occurring in our community. Our solutions provide opportunities for youth to succeed and help strengthen families. The mission of Reach For Youth is to empower Central Indiana youth and their families through prevention, intervention, counseling and youth development initiatives. Our vision is that every child will have the tools and resources to succeed in life.

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