



Public Defender: Vision for Excellence Students Interact With Bridges Of America

Chaplain Robert Brown and The Jacksonville Bridge Work Release Center Staff coordinated and facilitated the following event.

Building a Bridge With Youth Through Group Efforts

Five participants in The Bridges of America work release program joined several Duval County Public School children and their parents at the Office of Public Defender Matt Shirk to discuss some of the life-altering consequences people endure following incarceration. The program, spearheaded by The Florida Star Newspaper, was a follow-up session from the successful Public Defender: Vision for Excellence youth summer program. VFE was a four-week, educational and motivational summer camp for forty 10-14 young men from

Jacksonville's urban neighborhoods. The idea for the interactive session was to provide therapy for the transitioning offenders as well as life lessons for the students. The event took place on August 24, 2011 at the Office of the Public Defender in Downtown Jacksonville. Bono's BBQ catered the dinner. Several of the Vision for Excellence presenters from the summer program were on hand to participate in the interaction and provide character building messages to both the Bridges attendees and the young people. Presenters included Sen. Tony Hill, Rep. Reggie Fullwood, Soil and Water Conservation District 5 Commissioner Chelsi PHenry, Greg Williams representing the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, Assistant Public Defender Melina Buncome and Katy A. Harris and Assistant State Attorney Octavious Holiday who coordinated the Vision mock trial event and several others. G' Abrams of The Florida Star Newspaper and liaison to the Bridges of America program organized group interaction and discussion in an effort to bring different perspectives to both the students and offenders. Many of the presenters participated in the discussion as well. The group helped the Bridges participants to better understand their missteps while the students were privy to these life lessons.

For more information click on the links below.

http://www.mattshirkpublicdefender.com/uploads/NR_VFEMeetsBridges_vfr.pdf

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