



MISSOURI JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION EXCELLENCE IN JUVENILE COURT PROGRAM AWARD 2018

31st JUDICIAL CIRCUIT Greene County Youth Academy

One of MJJA's many goals is to share information on new ideas and programming designed by Missouri's juvenile and family courts, which are truly beneficial to the children they serve. When MJJA created the "Excellence in Juvenile Court Program Award" in 1993, it did so with two purposes in mind: first, to acknowledge the outstanding work being done in juvenile and family courts throughout the state; and, second to inspire us all to creativity and excellence. From its inception, MJJA has chosen to recognize a program only if it has risen to the level, established through a judging process, to truly merit the label "EXCELLENT". While many good programs have been offered for consideration, one program was chosen by the Juvenile Court Program Award Committee to receive this year's Excellence Award.

The Greene County Youth Academy (GCYA) was created in June of 1997 and serves as a Missouri Division of Youth Services diversionary program. Through a partnership with Springfield Public Schools, court involved youth who are in need of therapeutic services are provided enhanced educational opportunities not available to them in a traditional educational setting.

Post adjudicated youth ages 12-17 are eligible for the program, however youth as young as 11 and as old as 18 have also been served.

The main objective of the GCYA is to reduce the number of commitments to the Division of Youth Services by providing youth the skills they need to be successful in the community, decreasing their likelihood of recidivating.

In addition to the education elements, GCYA provides on-site individual counseling as a mandatory component of the treatment. In addition, family therapy, anger management, music therapy and Moral Reconciliation Therapy are also offered as therapeutic interventions.

Using the *Circle of Courage* model, the GCYA also focuses on positive youth development. This model concentrates on instilling youth with a variety of positive skill sets that will help them be successful in their communities, into adulthood. Each youth who participates in GCYA is partnered with a “coach” who acts as a mentor and helps guide them through any issues or challenges they may face.

The GCYA program has been operating for over 20 years and has proven to be successful. In 2016, Greene County committed 29 youth to Division of Youth Services and in 2017, only 28 youth were committed.

In a letter of support for the program, a writer recognized the “incredible change in the young men and women involved in the program” and further attributed this in part due to “opportunities they have had for non-traditional counseling via music therapy, community interaction, and other components of great programming established by the administrators of the Greene County Juvenile Justice Programs.”

Congratulations to the 31st Circuit for being honored as the recipient of the 2018 MISSOURI JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION “Excellence in Juvenile Court Program Award”.