



**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
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**NEWS RELEASE** *for Immediate Release*

**No. 2019 – 146**

**July 9, 2019, 4:45 p.m.**

**Teen Court Hosts Recognition Banquet**

The Department of Aging & Human Services was proud to host the Teen Court Volunteer Recognition Banquet at Elks Lodge 2092 June 27, 2019.

“The banquet was an opportunity to express our appreciation to our partnering agencies for their long-term commitment over the years to develop, strengthen and expand the program as well as recognize our adult and teen volunteers who are so very valuable and important to the continued success of the program,” said Cynthia Brown, Human Services Division Manager with the St. Mary’s County Department of Aging & Human Services.

This was the first banquet held since 2012. The St. Mary’s County Teen Court program began in 2003 and, to date, has diverted nearly 900 teen offenders from the formal juvenile justice system. Teen Court is a partnership between St. Mary’s County Government, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, the State’s Attorney’s Office for St. Mary’s County, the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office and St. Mary’s County Public Schools. It is designed to reduce the number of youthful offenders and educate youth in an actual court environment. Teen Court is a juvenile justice diversion program offering the first-time misdemeanor offender, ages 11-17, and first-time traffic offenders under the age of 18, the opportunity to accept accountability for their minor crimes without having to incur a permanent criminal record or traffic court fines and points.

“Teen Court is a unique voluntary program that allows juvenile respondents to be judged by a jury of their peers. It is truly a program of ‘Teens Helping Teens,’” said Gregory Jones, Teen Court Coordinator. “The St. Mary’s County Teen Court Program provides a unique opportunity for teens who make their first really bad decision that results in their getting arrested or charged with a traffic offense, with an opportunity to get a second chance in life. The teen jurors are incredibly insightful and fair to their fellow teens. It is a program that truly works and does make a difference on most of those offenders fortunate enough to have their case diverted to Teen Court.”

Teen Court utilizes teen volunteers ages 11-17 to serve on the jury, hear details about the offense, and determine the appropriate “sanctions” imposed on the offender to help him/her see

changes needed to make better decisions. Adult volunteers, ages 18+, are needed to serve as administrative aids, jury monitors and community judges.

"Our Teen Court program is one the Department is very proud of and all the volunteers who make time to help improve the lives of others," said Lori Jennings-Harris, Director of the St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services.

For additional information, visit [www.stmarysmd.com/teencourt](http://www.stmarysmd.com/teencourt). Any adult or teen interested in volunteering with Teen Court should contact the Teen Court Coordinator Gregory Jones at 301-475-4200, ext. 71852, or email [Gregory.Jones@stmarysmd.com](mailto:Gregory.Jones@stmarysmd.com).

