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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Municipal Court to begin Teen Court program

Kerrville, Texas (Aug. 19, 2024) – The Kerrville Municipal Court is scheduled to begin a Teen Court Program starting in October 2024.

In 2023, the Texas Legislature mandated all municipal courts to adopt a diversion policy to be in place on Jan. 1, 2025. The goal of a diversion policy is to ensure that juveniles have an opportunity to enter adulthood without a criminal record that could impede their educational, employment and military opportunities. Teen Court is an approved option for the diversion policy.

What is Teen Court? Teen Court is real court. The teen defendants who appear before the Kerrville Teen Court have to agree to participate in the program and are defended, prosecuted and sentenced by teens. Guilt and innocence will not be determined by the jury; punishment is the only thing to be addressed in teen court. The six-person jury will be comprised of a mix of teen volunteers with the Kerrville Teen Court and prior defendants who have been

sentenced to participate in a certain number of jury panels as part of their punishment. If the teen defendant successfully completes the Teen Court Program, then the charge is dismissed.

The Kerrville Municipal Judge will preside over Teen Court and the City Marshal will be the bailiff. Teen Court sessions will be held on a Tuesday evening each month during the school year beginning in October.

Eligibility of Teen Court?

- Juveniles between the ages of 10-16; 17 and 18 years old if the defendant is still enrolled in a secondary school.
- Juveniles who have not participated in a teen court program within the previous 12 months of the violation date.
- Juveniles who have pled "Guilty" or "No Contest" to the Class C Misdemeanor.

Benefits of Teen Court

- Hold offenders responsible for their behavior;
- Provide teenage defendants with a positive experience in the judicial system, thereby reducing recidivism and helping deter the defendant from committing other crimes;
- Establish positive relationships between the community and its youth, which creates a better understanding;
- Promote a positive attitude of teenagers toward authority by treating all individuals with respect;
- Successful completion of Teen Court will result in dismissal.

The Municipal Court staff is excited about this program and believes the teens and the community will benefit from having such a program. Teens that are interested and would like to volunteer for the Teen Court Program; can contact the court office at 830-257-2388, or email the Teen Court Coordinator, Yesenia Luna at yesenia.luna@kerrvilletx.gov.



The City of Kerrville's inaugural Teen Court volunteer members and mentors include: (Front row, from left) Teen Court Coordinator Yesenia Luna, Ava Olvera, Maya Sosa, Bellah Flores, Brody Butler, Hannah Hood, Riley Russ, Hattie Gilbreath, Hinley Imel, Sloane Hendricks, Judge Lucy Pearson; (Back row) City Manager Dalton Rice, William Russ, Isabel Sanchez, Anna Henson, William Sumner, Julian Duarte, Azur Anderson, Jakob Wyman, William Jackson, Assistant City Attorney and Municipal Court Prosecutor William Tatsch.

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