



Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County

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Newsrooms: Video of this program can be found here: https://youtu.be/9FOY42BzH_U.

Music Program in Juvenile Detention Helps Youth Succeed

Program offers youth opportunities for growth and learning

PHOENIX (Aug. 18, 2021) – Teaching youth to see the world through a different set of eyes is a challenge taken on daily by most juvenile detention officers while motivating detained youth to succeed. A music program in Juvenile Detention, part of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County, is giving officers another tool to help cultivate their talents.

“We get kids here in detention that are very talented. Throughout the years, we’ve seen kids develop themselves musically,” said Youth Development Coordinator Alex Lopez. “So, what we do is, we try to guide them.”

From learning how to play the guitar to producing music, detained youth are getting the opportunity to learn a new skill while finding their true strength.

“When I was younger, I went through a lot. I didn’t have a childhood and most of my growing up was being abused,” explains one youth involved in the music program. “There weren’t a lot of things I was able to do but listening to music was the only thing that really helped me.”

These opportunities were advanced by Maricopa County School Superintendent Steve Watson with a large donation of instruments from Raymond Pallanes’ Stir it Up Records, and a partnership with the foundation Restore Arts, which receives donated instruments and reconditions them to give to schools.

“We never know what might spark a student’s passion and inspire them to engage with school. That is why it is so important to offer them as many opportunities to find that passion as we can,” Superintendent Watson said.

The detention center saw a need to identify and implement more youth-oriented activities that allowed for growth opportunities grounded in positive development, which has been an ongoing organizational shift driven by research.

According to Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Eric Meaux, the continuous improvement activities of detention employees encouraged the team to create an environment that is safe and developmentally appropriate for youth.

“Holding youth accountable for their behavior includes creating meaningful opportunities for growth and success. Our detention employees engage youth in a manner that supports this environment, and our community should be proud,” Meaux said. “The support of the school district took this vision to the next level, for which we are grateful.”

Most of the kids in the program have found a way to cope with past traumas while learning how to make music. Juvenile Detention Officer Lawrence Brown says the program gives kids confidence and helps them create their own works of art. “This gives them a sense of hope to me,” he said.

The program teaches a little bit of music theory and a little bit about the music business. It’s a nontraditional program in the sense that it doesn’t include a lot of individualized instrument learning, but it tackles production as a whole, according to Music Teacher Sage Satterfield.

“I’ve seen students who have difficulty focusing or have anger issues or have just self-esteem issues really blossom through being able to create art and have a deeper understanding of both themselves and being able to have control of something because a lot in their lives, especially our students here, they don’t have control of so this gives them something they have complete control of and where they can express themselves,” Satterfield said.

To learn more about the program, view this video: https://youtu.be/9FOY42BzH_U.

Recently, Juvenile Detention was named as a finalist for the 2021 Performance-based Standards Barbara Allen-Hagen Award in their efforts to reduce isolation and confinement in the facility. Many changes were implemented at Juvenile Detention to foster an environment where both staff and youth felt safe and supported, including adding additional staff to decrease staff burnout that ultimately led to increased opportunities for youth engagement. The PbS Barbara Allen-Hagen Award was established in 2007 to honor Barbara Allen-Hagen and her retirement from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

To explore employment opportunities working with youth in Maricopa County Juvenile Detention, view Judicial Branch jobs at www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/jobs. Juvenile Detention Officers must be 21 years old, have a high school diploma or GED and complete a comprehensive background investigation. The positions offer a 4/10 work schedule, participation in the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System, full benefits and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of youth aged 8-17 involved with the justice system.

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