

SALT LAKE PEER COURT

A PROGRAM OF UTAH LAW RELATED EDUCATION

SUMMER
NEWSLETTER
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From the Director

I am very excited to report on the fantastic training we provided our 118 youth volunteers this summer. Over the last six weeks, Salt Lake Peer Court's high school volunteers attended 40 rigorous hours of training on the history, theories, and practices of restorative justice.

The first week of training at the University of Utah ran from July 28th-31st. More than 100 high school youth court volunteers from around our state convened at the 17th annual Utah Youth Court Association's Youth Court Conference. After an inspiring welcome address from the S.J. Quinney College of Law's Dean of Admissions, Reyes Aguilar, the conference featured a keynote performance on bias awareness by social improvisation group Speak Your Peace. University of Utah health educator Marty Liccardo gave an insightful presentation on gender and masculinity. SLCPD's Chief Chris Burbank welcomed us to the new Public Safety Building for a tour and an inspiring keynote speech in which Chief Burbank gave a strong endorsement for the use of restorative justice youth courts. District Attorney Sim Gill spoke with our youth volunteers about successful contemporary applications of restorative justice in our county, such as Mental Health Court, Early Case Resolution, and Family Justice Court. On the last day of the conference, we participated in a fun and meaningful service project with the University of Utah's Bennion Center.

During the Utah Youth Court Conference, the Utah Youth Court Association elected me President of the UYCA. My term will last for the next 2 years. Over the course of the next two years, I hope to continue offering in-depth restorative justice trainings and conferences for youth courts around the state. I also hope to set up a state-wide Youth Court Database so that the Utah Youth Court Association can begin reporting data on the practices of youth courts statewide, and develop metrics for measuring the success of youth courts around the state.

The week after the conference, Salt Lake Peer Court took more than 80 of our youth volunteers up Big Cottonwood Canyon to an overnight training at Camp Tuttle. On the first day of camp, our volunteers learned the importance of teamwork, communication skills, patience, and creativity during the four-hour Camp Tuttle Ropes Course. For the second half of the day, our youth court panelists attended a class in which they learned the essentials of restorative justice from Kathleen Zeitlin, Director of Salt Lake Peer Court for 20 years. They also met with Kate Larimer, professional

Mediator with Utah Dispute Resolution and SLPC Alum, to learn mediation and conflict negotiation skills that they can implement as panelists. Finally, our volunteers discussed effective mentoring techniques with Iris Salazar, SLPC Alum and Program Coordinator for 9 years. The second day of training at Camp Tuttle featured student-led mock hearings and a compassionate Diversity Training led by Carla Kelley, Director of the Human Rights Education Center of Utah.

The first day of training at the Utah State Bar featured keynote presentations by local organizations that offer restorative justice dispositions for youth offenders like the Salt Lake City Bicycle Collective, the Salt Lake County Division of Youth Services, and the Volunteers of America – Utah’s Cornerstone Counseling Center. During the second day of training at the Utah State Bar, our volunteers participated in a 3-hour poverty simulation conducted by the Community Action Partnership of Utah. Since 95% of the youth referred to our court come from families living at or below the poverty line, this poverty simulation was used to give our youth volunteers perspective on some of the many obstacles that our clientele face.

The Sorenson Unity Center hosted our final day of training, which was open to the public. We kicked off this “Restorative Justice Day” with an insightful and inspiring panel discussion between S.J. Quinney College of Law Professor Emily Chiang, Salt Lake City Police Department Chief Chris Burbank, and District Attorney Sim Gill. Mediated by University of Utah Professor Cassie Powers, this stimulating panel discussion focused on restorative justice and civic duty. Mediator Cassie Powers did a fantastic job of bringing youth voices into the discussion, encouraging our youth volunteers to ask tough questions of the panelists about the school to prison pipeline, disproportionate minority contact, and mass incarceration. Each of the panelists encouraged our students to exercise their rights as citizens and actively participate in our democracy.

The following Monday, August 25th, our panelists attended their Swearing-In Ceremony at the main public library downtown. After fantastic speeches by three of our peer court panelists, Dr. Theresa Jefferson from the Salt Lake City School District spoke to our panelists about resilience – using the lives of Oprah Winfrey and Maya Angelou to tell inspiring stories of resilience and perseverance. Following Dr. Jefferson’s inspiring presentation, the Honorable Judge Tupakk Renteria, a local example of resilience and perseverance, swore our students in as Peer Court Panelists.

After a successful month of trainings, we are excited to begin hearing cases on Monday, September 29th.

Salt Lake Peer Court would not be able to do any of these trainings without the help of local in-kind contributors, generous grants from foundations, the Salt Lake City Police Department, and the Salt Lake City School District. As a program of Utah Law Related Education, a 501c3 nonprofit, we rely heavily on donations and grants. If you would like to make a donation to our program, please go to our website SaltLakePeerCourt.org and click on “Donate.”

If you are interested in volunteering, or would like to learn more about our restorative justice model, please do not hesitate to visit our website SaltLakePeerCourt.org or contact the office at slpcourt@xmission.com.

Tyler Bugden



Page One Header: Peer Court students hike above Silver Lake at Solitude Ski Resort after Camp Tuttle training.
Left and Center: Peer Court members work together to complete the Camp Tuttle Ropes Course.
Right: Peer Court volunteers attempt to register family members for school during the Poverty simulation.

Panelist Voices: Tabitha Amani, Juan Diego High Class of 2015

Tabitha is a first-year panelist with Salt Lake Peer Court. The following is a transcript of the excellent speech she gave at our Swearing In Ceremony on August, 25th, 2014. Tabitha is one of our refugee representatives on the panel, and she is also a member of Salt Lake Peer Court's 2014-2015 Youth Advisory Board.

Good evening,

My name is Tabitha Amani, and today I have the great honor to talk to you all about my experience with Salt Lake Peer Court. This will be my first year being a member of peer court. I came to know about it when my mother told me one night that I was going to join it. Not knowing what exactly peer court was, I did what any reasonable person would do. I Googled it. I found videos of teens from all around the United States excited about the help they were offering other youth. With my new gained knowledge, I was excited for the summer conference.

During the conference, I made new friends, went to many sessions and learned what restorative justice is. In one of our sessions we had a university professors speak on the issue of masculinity, and the way our society is hurting young ladies in the way we speak. I learned about "slut shaming" which is using words like "slut" to objectify girls. We not only spoke on young ladies being hurt by the words used by society but also how are words impact young men. The most powerful thing I remember learning was how we as a society insult men by calling them women, and insult women by calling them women. This session opened my mind to how I interact with everyone and the language I use.

Along with other informative sessions, I got the opportunity to tour the new Salt Lake Public Safety Building where we met with the Chief of Police, Chris Burbank. He spoke to us about the importance and effectiveness of restorative justice. In the Salt lake County, we have a disproportionate ratio of minorities in the correctional facility. Peer court is working to fix that.

Throughout many training sessions, I came to learn that along with mentoring, Peer Court's main objective is to break the School To Prison Pipeline. Often times, when students misbehave, schools are becoming dependent on suspensions, expulsions, and law enforcement to punish students. Children are being arrested or removed from schools, even for minor discretions. Peer court takes those students and gives them opportunities to take accountability, reflect and make amends. Peer court offers the youth meaningful opportunities for education, community involvement, and character building. I truly learned so much from all the training and breakout sessions; I learned how to avoid offensive language, use active listening, complete paperwork, determine dispositions, the list goes on. But this is only a 3 min speech. I am excited to be apart of such a movement. I want to thank you for coming and showing your support for youth who are making a change for one-another.



Judge Tupakk Renteria administers the oath of office for Salt Lake Peer Court's Panelists on August 25th, 2014.

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Salt Lake Peer Court works to combat the disproportionate involvement of low-income and minority students in America's school to prison pipeline by providing youth who commit minor offenses with an alternative to the Juvenile Justice System. Our Strategy aims to break the cycle of poverty by giving low-income and at-risk youth a chance to escape a lifetime in the revolving door of America's justice system.

As youth and adults working together, caring and showing respect for one another, we will improve our neighborhoods, cities, and Juvenile Justice System. Through youth-led education and coordination with local community agencies, we will assist our peers and their families to strengthen their ties to school and community while building positive new skills.

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