

## The "Student's Court" Students share knowledge by tutoring

**Michelle Kutsunis**  
LO'T Editor

Are you looking for a different way to volunteer? Or maybe you want a fun way to spend a Monday night. If so, Peer Justice is the perfect way to help people.

The Peer Justice Program of Rock Island County has been in existence for over seven years. It is a volunteer mock trial where juvenile defendants can receive a sentence from other teen members of the jury if their crime is not charged as a felony or a misdemeanor.

To qualify, defendants must be referred by police departments, have admitted guilt for their actions, and have shown some amount of remorse. The program provides a huge incentive to defendants that chose to participate: if they successfully complete the program, no criminal conviction is given.

The police departments choose who is allowed to partake in the Peer Justice program. Departments from all over Rock Island County participate, but the Moline Police Department sends at least fifty percent of referrals received. This is because the Moline Police Department strongly believes in giving kids second chances.

One hundred to one hundred and twenty five offenders are referred each year, and only nine percent of those who complete the program wind up in trouble with the law again. The Peer Justice program is a very successful asset to the community.

Unfortunately funding was cut last year. The program used to be

funded by a juvenile block grant, but now it is county funded. If a speeding ticket is received, and then contested in court, five dollars of the ticket goes toward funding the program. To keep the program running smoothly, it requires teens to volunteer as jurors. Ideally the program would like between sixty and seventy-five jurors. Right now the program only has forty-five.

It is a great learning experience, and if anyone is at all interested in learning how a real trial works, it is a great way to experience the drama. The trials even have judges and lawyers who volunteer their Monday nights two to three times a month, along with the teen jurors. Right now the program has eight judges.

Tiffany Clark, the coordinator of the program says of the program "It is an awesome chance for kids to volunteer and give back to the community. Its also a great learning experience."

In past years, the program has given presentations to Moline's government classes, and even hosted a small mock trial in class. Presentations are given to Moline, Alleman, Rock Island, and United Township high schools, though most of the jurors come from Alleman. This is unfortunate, because a majority of the cases come from Moline.

The program hopes to give presentations again this year, but nothing has been set up yet. Students who want more information or an application for the program, should call the Rock Island County Youth Service Bureau. The phone number is 793-3460, ask for Tiffany Clark.

**By: Jane Wiborg**  
LO'T Focus Editor

A lot of students in high school eventually realize that what they learn early on in their education really is important.

To learn studying skills and the importance of good grades, Moline students are tutoring kids at various grade schools throughout the district.

Emiley Wilson, an MHS senior who volunteers as a tutor at Roosevelt Elementary School, started the program for many reasons.

She explained, "I have always dreamed of being a teacher, and it is an opportunity to gain experience with teaching children."

Another senior at MHS involved is Ashley Devrieze. Ashley keeps going back because "It's a really good cause and the girl I am helping really needs someone to guide her."

Studies show that childrens' mind's are more open to linguistic development. This is why many people in our area

believe that elementary students need tutors to keep their grades up from the beginning.

The students who volunteer their time as tutors are helping these young minds develop and learn the basics of education while their brain can still fully accept the information. During this time, help in school is greatly appreciated and often viewed as a positive experience.

The student tutors interviewed agreed that they keep going back twice a week to see the progress their students are making, and to keep checking up on their progress.

"I really feel as if I'm helping her become a better reader!" shares Emiley Wilson.

Sometimes the tutors will do extra things for their students, such as create a study guide or a sheet of formulas for them to study from. Ashley Devrieze says, "There was a time that we were studying math and she did not know how to write numbers using words, so I made a study sheet for her with numbers 10 through 100,000.

It helped her say the numbers aloud and made it easier to figure out her problem".

There are many reasons why the tutoring provides satisfaction for those involved.

The students are learning fundamental elements that will help them throughout their school careers, and the tutors themselves are learning from the program as well. Emiley Wilson expresses, "It's good to know that someone could be depending on you and learning from you every day."

Teens volunteering in their community is a very important thing. Usually high school students get a bad reputation because only the bad things they do are well known. But those who get out there and help out the environment or care for a neighbor, could make a difference. Emiley Wilson agrees, "Whether it be picking up trash, volunteering at a nursing home, or tutoring local children in school, we can prove that teens can give back to the community."

## Community contributes to Share Joys cause

**By: Michelle Kutsunis**  
LO'T Focus Editor

Volunteering isn't just for teens, many adults volunteer too.

Philanthropy continues into the adult and professional world. Many local businesses generously donated to the MHS Share Joys fund. Without their help many kids will now receive clothes and presents.

Some examples of the donations of business are

Coca-cola, which provides product for the "Coke Tree" and the wing activities, and thanks to Jennifer Sanchez, Wal-Mart donated two thousand dollars.

Mills Chevrolet donated a 2000 Saturn to be raffled off at Share Joys and Donut Delight donated all the doughnuts and provided all the set up for the Doughnut Eating Contest.

Heritage landscape donated a \$100 gift certificate and Sears donated

an MP3 player, a Boom Box a DVD player, and an under cabinet T.V. Floorcrafters have been donating rugs for many years.

All of these items will be raffled off for Share Joys.

These businesses are great role models. Without their support many families would not have the luxuries that many of us enjoy each holiday season. Share Joys is such a success thanks to the community support.



Michelle Kutsunis, Natalie Cartwright, Stephanie Mills, Courtney Fournier, Nicole Johnson, Kylie Higgins, Courtney Mitten, and Laina Lagomarcino by the share joy car photo by Ryan Memner