

April 18, 2008

Open house today for Juvenile Office's Evening Reporting Center

The Greene County Juvenile Office is hosting an open house for the Evening Reporting Center today from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at 924 N. Main Ave. in Springfield.

The Evening Reporting Center opens Monday. The center houses a new program of services available to Greene County courts as an alternative to secure detention for juvenile offenders aged 13-16 who have committed nonviolent offenses.

Juveniles enrolled in the program must report to the center from 4 to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, for 20 days. While at the center, juveniles take part in highly-structured classes designed to teach responsibility and rehabilitate the offender from crimes committed.

Classes range from mental health issues, like anger management and substance abuse education; to practical skills like banking and budgeting, healthy eating habits and etiquette.

The program allows juveniles to be under court supervision while continuing to reside at home and attend school.

Perry Epperly, Greene County Chief Juvenile Officer, said the program is designed to reduce participants' likelihood of repeated offense by teaching life skills while keeping them off the streets during hours teens are most likely to commit crimes.

"This program is meant for lower-risk youth," said Epperly. "We want to offer them an alternative to secure detention while at the same time promoting public safety by limiting their interaction with the community."

Epperly added that placing lower-risk youth in secure detention with juvenile offenders who have committed more serious crimes can be detrimental to their behavior. However, participants who do not follow the rules of the Evening Reporting Center program may be placed in secure detention.

"It's not a get-out-of-jail card," Epperly said. "There are expectations of participants, and noncompliance will result in consequences."

The Evening Reporting Center is based on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a model of detention reform the Greene County Juvenile Office has adopted.

The program is made possible by partnerships with volunteers from the mental health, education and business community, many of who teach classes and coordinate activities at the Evening Reporting Center.