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SAO, STAKEHOLDERS CELEBRATE 2 YEARS OF JUVENILE CIVIL CITATION SUCCESS

Two years ago, law enforcement from each agency in the Fourth Circuit and community stakeholders signed a historic agreement to expand the use of juvenile civil citations.

The results are clear: the smart justice program is working.

Juvenile civil citations are an arrest alternative that promotes quicker accountability and intervention opportunities for youth who commit certain misdemeanor and municipal offenses. Law enforcement issues a citation and youth enter the Teen Court program, where they receive sanctions for their actions. Once the program is complete, they will have no arrest record for the offense.

Victims receive speedier resolutions. Taxpayers save on incarceration costs. Law enforcement is able to reallocate resources. And juvenile civil citations make the public is safer — Florida Department of Juvenile Justice data shows that 96% of youth do not reoffend within a year of completing the program.

“Juvenile civil citations are making a positive difference in our community,” said State Attorney Melissa Nelson. “Law enforcement and the public should be extremely proud of these results.”

A snapshot of success: In 2018, juvenile arrests declined 58% from 2017. Juvenile civil citations increased 42% during that same timeframe. In all, law enforcement in Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties issued citations to 83% of eligible youth in 2018 — a substantial increase from the 28% rate as recently as 2015.

Nelson, Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Simone Marstiller, Sheriff Mike Williams, Teen Court Director Stacy Peterson, and Assistant Public Defender Rob Mason took part in a panel

discussion just shy of the two-year signing anniversary to talk about the successes, challenges, real-life impacts, and future of the program.

The Fourth Circuit continues to climb the statewide rankings as civil citations and other pre-arrest programs are being promoted.

“This is a success story,” Marstiller said during the panel discussion. “If you intervene quickly and early enough with the right element of accountability and the right intervention, it works and keeps kids out of the juvenile justice system.”

As the ones who first interact with youthful offenders, officers maintain discretion over civil citation issuance and have been trained by their leadership on when citations are applicable. During the panel discussion, Williams said increasing the use and getting buy-in from officers was key.

See the entire panel discussion at <https://bit.ly/2Ykf66a>.