

Judge E. Kyle Vantrease
Chief's Judge Office
911 Casey Ave.
Mt. Vernon, Illinois 62864
618-244-8036 (phone)
618-244-8038 (fax)

Judge George Timberlake,
Chairman
gtimberlake@sbcglobal.net

Linda Brown / Janice Alka
Coordinators
Brownlinda.63@gmail.com
jalka@verizon.net

Jerilee Hopkins
Trial Court Administrator
ihopkins@ieffil.us

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Second Judicial Circuit Juvenile Justice Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Contact: Linda Brown
2nd Circuit Juvenile Justice Council
618-843-8291

SOUTHEASTERN ILLINOIS EFFORT TO TURN AROUND YOUNG OFFENDERS RECEIVES \$349,500 GRANT

MT. VERNON, IL – A \$349,500 foundation grant will fund the expansion of a juvenile justice improvement program in southeastern Illinois and permit the addition of a full-time coordinator to help deliver the improvements in the 12-county effort.

The grant, which was announced Wednesday, is from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change national initiative to reform juvenile justice. Illinois is one of four states participating in Models for Change, and the Illinois 2nd Judicial Circuit is one of five demonstration sites expanding community-based alternatives to confinement in Illinois.

"We've made a good deal of progress in turning around young people in trouble, and this grant should help us do even more in the near future," said Judge E. Kyle Vantrease, who is chief judge of the 2nd Judicial Circuit Court. "By holding young people accountable for their crimes and providing rehabilitation opportunities, we can keep our communities safe and increase the chances that those youngsters will become law-abiding adults."

Created in 2002, the 2nd Circuit Juvenile Justice Council includes representatives of law enforcement, the courts, probation, schools, and community-based agencies that deal with juvenile delinquency and its consequences. The Council encourages the exchange of ideas among the counties, identifies areas in need of assistance and plans future improvements in the local juvenile justice system.

Linda Brown of Olney has been hired as the project coordinator for the Juvenile Justice Council. Brown has nearly 18 years of experience with the Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers, where she was Director of Prevention Services from 2006 to 2007. Brown most recently has worked in marketing and sales for Highway Two, a sales and distribution company in Olney. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio.

“Because the 2nd Judicial District stretches across a dozen counties, it is important that we have a full-time coordinator on the ground and helping keep the lines of communications open,” said George W. Timberlake, retired chief judge of the 2nd Judicial Circuit and current Chair of the 2nd Circuit Juvenile Justice Council. “With Linda’s help and her knowledge of the system, we will be able to bring new services to every corner of the district.”

The counties in the 2nd Judicial District are Crawford, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne, and White.

In addition to employing a full-time coordinator, the new MacArthur Foundation Models for Change grant will be used to accomplish the following:

- An ongoing project to collect data about each juvenile offender will continue and be improved. The “J Watch” data base and case management system helps the courts have a better understanding of contacts each juvenile has had with the court system and social service agencies. Information is shared among social service providers, schools and law enforcement.
- There will be an expanded use of alternatives to expensive and often ineffective secure confinement for juvenile offenders. Community-based programming keeps youths with their family members and fosters rehabilitation.
- Young people entering the Franklin County Juvenile Detention Center will receive mental health assessments to identify problems that may need immediate attention.
- The 2nd Judicial District Juvenile Justice Council will assist the juvenile justice councils that recently have been established in each county. The district-wide council will help the county councils determine how best to meet the various concerns of each community and will promote broad community participation and collaboration.
- There will be a full “mapping” of the juvenile justice system in the 2nd Circuit. The “mapping” will identify every point where youth enter the system, including social service agencies that often respond to domestic violence situations involving young people. This comprehensive map will be reviewed to determine where there could be improved responses and where policy changes might be warranted.
- Jefferson County, the area of the circuit with the largest minority population, will receive technical support and resources to analyze data that could identify whether a disproportionate number of minorities come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

“By working together, we are holding young offenders accountable for their crimes, and we’re helping them change the behaviors that led to these crimes,” Timberlake said. “As a result, our neighborhoods are safer, and our youngsters are more likely to grow into responsible adults.”

“There is no doubt that when young people get in trouble, we must hold them accountable for their actions,” said Wabash County State’s Attorney Cassandra Goldman. “But that alone will not stop criminal behavior. We also must try to help those youngsters change. If we don’t change their lives now, they will be back in the criminal justice system and time and each return is costly to their victims and to taxpayers.”

“This kind of coordinated effort to deter juvenile crime has become a model for the nation,” said Diane Geraghty, director of the Loyola Civitas ChildLaw Center in Chicago, lead entity for the MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change initiative in Illinois. “You have developed a system that works for southeastern Illinois, but it also is something that could be adapted to similar communities throughout the nation.”

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About the MacArthur Foundation

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.macfound.org.

About Models for Change

Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice Initiative of the [MacArthur Foundation](http://www.macfound.org) is a long-term effort to accelerate progress toward a more [rational, fair, effective, and developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system](#). Models for Change works by partnering with selected states to support successful models of system change—which can be studied, disseminated, and emulated elsewhere. In Illinois, Models for Change is supporting efforts to address disproportionate minority involvement with the juvenile justice system, expand community-based alternatives to formal processing and incarceration of juveniles, and restore appropriate jurisdictional boundaries to the juvenile court.