

Program: Are There “OPTIONS” For Teens In Detention?

Speaker: Jill H. Meisenheimer and Cheryl Hazelrigg, Becky Kapsalis, Linda Yee

Attendance: 95

Guests: Ted Danielson, Peter Iversen, Jennifer Piatt, David Ross, P. T. Hodgins

Introduced By: Bob Yee

Scribe: Don Mink

Editor: Ed Nitka

It is the mission of the Hamilton County Juvenile Services Center to provide our youth with a safe, secure, and healthy environment by holding them accountable for their behavior through positive reinforcement; and provide the youth with an opportunity for behavioral change through various programs.\* Today’s program was presented by Jill H. Meisenheimer (Sciencetech Club member), Cofounder and Coordinator of OPTIONS, a weekly program for teens in secure detention, Hamilton County Juvenile Detention Center. Cheryl, Becky, and Linda were co-presenters.

The Juvenile Detention Center is a secure residential facility that holds youth accused of delinquent or criminal activity while awaiting legal action, for the purpose of protecting both the detained youth and the community. “Options” was created in June, 1994, as a new Girl Scout Troop (not girls or scouts) and meets weekly at the Detention Center. Options encourages attendees to express their feelings before and after a session, and, to think about people other than themselves (Ripple Effect). The four goals of each session are: 1) Discuss the Ripple Effect; 2) Exercise every session; 3) Plan for positive future; and, 4) Do community service.

National statistics show that approximately 70,000 young people are in juvenile detention or correctional facilities each night. In 2016, Hamilton County held 281 juveniles in secure detention. This included 91 for parole violation, 47 for drug/drug related offenses, and, 41 for battery.

In the same year, 144 teens (112 boys, 32 girls) attended Options sessions, and 459 hours of volunteer and speaker hours covered Yoga and Y12SR, Project EKG (Educating Kids against Guns), financial literacy, soccer, art, persistence, and, Bird Lady sessions. Indiana University is involved with the Options program.

Physical exercises include yoga, soccer, and snowball (audience participation). A yoga 12-step recovery program, as used in other rehabilitation programs (e.g. AA), is provided. Brainstorming, reflections, and evaluations help residents develop their own assessment; the audience was given the opportunity to complete an assessment form. Community service projects included 128 hours by residents and 11 hours by volunteers in 2016.

Options funding has come in the past from Indiana Department Education Learn & Serve Grants, Noblesville Schools, and the Hamilton County Council on Alcohol, Tobacco & Drugs. Current funding is through the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Department and “Youth as Resources” grants from United Way.

It is difficult to assess the success of the program because residents’ violations are not known and individuals can’t be tracked. However, a short term impact is shown in evaluations with before/after “feelings” & reactions during session.

\* [www.hamiltoncounty.in.gov/565/Juvenile-Services-Center](http://www.hamiltoncounty.in.gov/565/Juvenile-Services-Center)



Linda, Jill, Cheryl, Becky