



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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SEATTLE LAUNCHES YOUTH TRAFFIC COURT

(Seattle) Teen drivers who admit they committed their traffic offense will have the opportunity to have their punishment set by their peers instead of a judge through a new Youth Traffic Court alliance among Seattle Municipal Court, Seattle University School of Law, and Garfield High School. The city's first Youth Traffic Court will allow eligible teen drivers to appear before Garfield High School students at Seattle University School of Law, rather than in Municipal Court. The first cases are scheduled to be heard in March.

"Youth courts provide an opportunity for teens to take responsibility for their driving mistakes, while keeping their driving record clean," said Margaret Fisher, a Distinguished Practitioner in Residence at Seattle University School of Law and a national expert in youth courts, who is overseeing the law school's involvement.

Qualified defendants will appear before the Youth Court, receive a sanction of community service, youth court jury service, preventative education and/or similar consequences. If they comply, the infraction will be dismissed and it will not be reported to the Department of Licensing or appear on the defendants' driving record.

Garfield High School students will serve as judges, jurors, prosecutors and defense attorneys and court staff. They will be trained and supported by volunteer law students from Seattle University School of Law. The high school students will take part in an intensive training before the first hearing and will meet with their law school mentors regularly.

"Youth court provides a meaningful civic opportunity for students, who will have the responsibility of deciding real cases," said Judge Karen Donohue.

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The Seattle Police Department, Seattle City Attorney's Office, Seattle Municipal Court, and Seattle University Law School faculty are all committed to working with students through this innovative program.

Organizing and implementing the Seattle Youth Traffic Court has been a collaborative effort involving Fisher, Seattle Municipal Court Judge Karen Donohue; Seattle Municipal Court Magistrate Lisa Leone; Sally Haber, director of the Children's Literacy Project at Seattle University; Diana Singleton, Director of Access to Justice Institute at Seattle University School of Law; and, Corey Martin, history teacher and SYTC advisor at Garfield High School. Seattle Youth Traffic Court was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Seattle City Council.

If you would like more information, please contact Professor Margaret Fisher at fisherm2@seattleu.edu.

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