

# Monthly Newsletter

APRIL

youthoptionsshasta.org

2025

## Dignity Health Grant



Youth Options Shasta Awarded \$55,000 from Dignity Health Common Spirit Grant to Expand Peer Court Program

Youth Options Shasta has been awarded a \$55,000 grant from Dignity Health, part of Common Spirit Health's Community Health Improvement Grants program. This funding will directly support the growth and development of the organization's innovative Peer Court program—an alternative juvenile justice initiative that empowers young people to take an active role in restorative justice.

### A.R.T. feedback

"R.L. has definitely been improving in his self-regulation. Previously anger outbursts would derail him for extended periods and the physical outbursts (throwing down desks for example) were much more dangerous. Recently, he recovers from disappointments much more quickly and his behaviors have been much less severe."- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Teacher

### Donation Corner

REDDING, Calif. — The Soroptimist International of Downtown Redding held its annual Awards and Recognition Luncheon on Wednesday March 26th, celebrating local women who are making a difference in their own lives and the lives of others. A.W. received a legacy memorial scholarship from the Soroptimist for her contributions to Peer Court. That came with a \$250 donation to the program.

### Parent Feedback

100% of parents felt the services their child received were appropriate, that the level of support by our staff met their needs, and that the program had a positive impact on their child's life.



# North State Parent Magazine

YOUTH, TEENS & VOLUNTEERS

NORTH STATE PARENT FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE SPRING/SUMMER 2025



Youth Options volunteers focus on empathy and accountability in Peer Court.

Ava Davis speaks at a local 9/11 event



Youth Options peer support volunteer Ava Davis teaches other volunteers how to facilitate the deliberation process. Photos provided by Youth Options.



## PEER TO PEER SUPPORT FOR TEENS

BY AVA DAVIS

Some people are like diamonds; under pressure, they become beautiful, molded by intense fire and pressure to reveal their brilliance. I believe everyone has the potential to become something extraordinary with the proper guidance.

One organization that offers this transformative support is Youth Options Shasta. They offer various programs designed to provide positive alternatives for youth, fostering growth and leadership.

Peer Court and the Youth Action Council are two of their most impactful initiatives. Peer Court is a restorative justice program for first-time juvenile offenders. Instead of navigating the traditional justice system, these young individuals have their cases heard before a jury of their peers. Their records are cleared by participating in the program and successfully completing their sentences without reoffending. This approach emphasizes understanding the root causes of behavior and creating paths toward positive change with the right to due process in a nonpunitive approach.

### Peer Court offers opportunity for learning, healthy relationships

What makes Peer Court so powerful is its focus on empathy and accountability. Youth jurors and attorneys ages 13 to 18 volunteer their time to listen, evaluate and recommend meaningful consequences. Through this process, young offenders learn from their mistakes and

gain the opportunity to become contributing members of their community as well as build new, healthy relationships within their peer system.

### Youth Action Council inspires teens to work toward change

Youth Action Council, another remarkable program, empowers teens by giving them a platform to bring their concerns to the government level and help present initiatives that are important to creating positive change at the high school level.

For example, last year, the Youth Action Council focused its initiatives on anti-tobacco and vape training, so students and youth can learn about the dangers of using drugs and utilize the local government to address issues that are important to them. This inspired teens who are invested in their communities to become interested in local government issues.

### A welcoming experience grows to deeper commitment, sense of purpose

My journey with Youth Options Shasta began when a friend invited me to attend Peer Court. Initially, I saw it as an opportunity to explore a potential career in law and meet new people. My first experience was during a case conference—an unusual starting point for newcomers. I was mostly quiet while observing the process, but I was struck by how welcoming and supportive everyone was.

They were eager to show me the ropes and teach me how to make an impact.

Over the past two years, my involvement with Peer Court has grown deeper. What keeps me coming back are the powerful stories and the sense of purpose it brings. I've witnessed cases that captured my attention and fueled my desire to help. There's something profoundly rewarding about seeing a peer rise above their mistakes and create a better future for themselves. It's a reminder that growth and redemption are possible for everyone.

Beyond the cases themselves, Peer Court has taught me invaluable lessons. I've learned not to judge others harshly—everyone has challenges that aren't always visible. This program has reinforced the importance of empathy, understanding and genuine connection.

Working alongside peers who share a common goal has made me a better person, instilling leadership skills and a commitment to service. Youth Options Shasta is more than just an organization; it's a catalyst for positive change, helping to push initiatives that are important to the teen community and allowing empowerment and positive development for our generation.

It has shaped my character and given me the tools to help others shine, just like diamonds under pressure. I wholeheartedly recommend getting involved for any teen interested in making a difference and learning valuable life skills. Together, we can create a brighter future, one peer at a time. ■