



COUNTY OF YOLO  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy D.A.

[Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org](mailto:Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org)

Bilingual Spanish Representative Available

@ (530) 666-8356

**DA's Office Hosts Appreciation Event For Neighborhood Court Volunteers**  
**DA, Neighborhood Court Staff Thank Davis, West Sacramento, and Woodland's Neighborhood Court Volunteers**

(Woodland, CA) – December 8, 2016 – On Tuesday, December 6, 2016, Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig and Neighborhood Court staff hosted a celebration honoring Neighborhood Court volunteers from Davis, Woodland, and West Sacramento. Over 40 program volunteers attended the event.

Neighborhood Court's Supervising Deputy District Attorney Christopher Bulkeley shared some words of a victim's post-conference evaluation that read, "Yolo County Neighborhood Court exceeded my expectations. Everyone involved was professional and had great input. I feel that this had a positive impact not only on the offender's life, but also on my life. This program Rocks!" Bulkeley praised the hard work of the program's volunteers, saying, "This program rocks because of your participation in and dedication to Neighborhood Court."

Neighborhood Court (NHC) is an innovative diversion program based on the principles of restorative justice that has been in operation since June of 2013. NHC aims to provide individualized outcomes for misdemeanor and infraction-level offenses; outcomes designed to educate and address the underlying issues affecting offenders while prioritizing their acceptance of responsibility and reparation of harms to the community and any direct victims affected. NHC is staffed by local volunteers who facilitate and hear these cases and develop agreements to resolve the cases outside of the traditional court process.

To date, NHC has held a total of 1140 conferences, requiring over 5900 volunteer service hours. Over 1600 of these hours were donated in 2016 alone. This is an enormous contribution of time by community members coupled with the weekends and evenings during which volunteers participated in training. Furthermore, by involving a diverse group of residents, NHC provides a voice for members of the communities affected by local crimes to express how they have been harmed and what they need in order to make things right.

NHC volunteers are trained in the basic principles of restorative justice and the 3-step Neighborhood Court conference process. Volunteers are asked to commit to one year of service, but many have continued to serve long beyond that as they see the impact the conferences can have on the participants' mindsets. Davis Panelist Faye Ashley, shares, "The most meaningful experiences are those when I see someone come to understand how his or her actions can impact others. I like thinking it lays a foundation for more foresight in the future...I am of the opinion that punishment that is not directly linked to the offense can too often result in a quid pro quo condition that leaves an offender feeling licensed to repeat the behavior without thinking about its impact on others."

The focus on restorative, rather than punitive solutions is a big draw for many volunteers. Woodland Facilitator Mari Perla comments, "I find satisfaction in my contribution to the restorative justice process because it repairs the harms caused by the offender's behavior and educates all participants: facilitator, panelists, and offender."

Volunteers must be residents of, or have strong ties to Yolo County since they are serving as representatives for the community. West Sacramento Panelist Debbie Talani adds that for her the "sense of community and being able to do my share in making it better for everyone," is one of the most important aspects of her participation.

A unified community must come together, not only to celebrate successes, but also to find solutions to problems. Through their service, volunteers are able to affect not only the trajectory of an offender's life, but the way in which their entire city responds to crime.

City of Davis Mayor Robb Davis noted that, "NHC is one of several restorative justice initiatives in the City of Davis and we are so thankful for the many volunteers who give their time to offer this program. It strengthens our city and enables citizens to engage in an approach to justice that builds accountability and offers a way for harms caused by crime to be made right." Mayor Davis is intimately familiar with NHC as he himself devoted many volunteer hours assisting in the design of the NHC conference process and volunteer training program in 2013. Davis Police Chief Darren Pytel commented that, "The Davis Police Department is a strong supporter of NHC and very much appreciates the commitment of the volunteers who make this program a success."

District Attorney Jeff Reisig commended the volunteers for their dedication and hard work, saying "Neighborhood Court absolutely relies on the support of the community through the contributions of dedicated volunteers – their involvement is a key factor in the program's continued development."

To find out more about the Neighborhood Court program or submit an application to register for 2017 training dates, visit [www.yoloda.org/nc](http://www.yoloda.org/nc) or email [NeighborhoodCourt@yolocounty.org](mailto:NeighborhoodCourt@yolocounty.org).

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