



TEEN COURT

By Kayla Smith

Teen Court of Queen Anne's County gives teens with misdemeanors a second chance, which is something hard to obtain in today's world where first impressions are often crucial to success. Frank Kratovil, however, has affected the future of many teens in this area by initiating and supporting Teen Court, allowing many teens to have a clean slate instead of a criminal record.

Frank Kratovil initiated Teen Court in Queen Anne's County in 2003 to educate young people about the justice system and allow them the opportunity to make fair decisions about their peers. It also gives first-time offenders the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

I joined the group because of my interest in law and the legal system. When the time finally came for my first case as defense attorney, Mr. Kratovil was at my side. It was nerve wracking looking into the eyes of my expectant peers and speaking confidently. Mr. Kratovil, however, was at the hearing and beforehand gave everyone a pep talk. He told us to have an open mind, because not everything is what it seems, and to have fun with this. We were given the opportunity to make decisions without adult influence, "how cool is that?" His open sense of humor eased the minds of many teens in that room, and the case went without fault.

Many young people's lives have been changed because of Teen Court. There have been very emotional trials with promising results. When offenders come back to serve as jury members, they often thank Mr. Kratovil and all the volunteers for giving them a second chance. Many stay with Teen Court because they enjoy the program. Overall, both volunteers and offenders are very grateful for the opportunity Mr. Kratovil has provided us.

Today as Mr. Kratovil runs for Congress he represents three main values: integrity, leadership, and results. From personal experiences I am certain Mr. Kratovil will settle for nothing less. His leadership in the community has already proved rewarding through the institution of Teen Court, and his integrity makes him a notable person. I'm sure that in the near future, we will see many wonderful results from Mr. Kratovil.