



NEWS RELEASE

Release Date: May 6, 2022

PEER COURT RETURNS TO IN-PERSON SESSIONS AFTER PANDEMIC ABSENCE

SUPERIOR COURT OF
CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF NAPA
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559
www.napa.courts.ca.gov

707-299-1100

Cynthia P. Smith
Presiding Judge

Robert E. Fleshman
Court Executive Officer

NAPA, CA – The Napa-American Canyon Peer Court returned to its first in-person session in two years earlier this week, hosted by the Napa County Superior Court. Due to the pandemic, Peer Court had gone entirely remote, much like other courtrooms in trial courts across the state.

The Napa-American Canyon Peer Court Program is part of a national and international movement in Youth Court systems known as Restorative Justice Programs. Youth Courts have been established to serve as diversion programs from the Juvenile Justice System for first time juvenile offenders who have committed a low-level violation of the law. The Respondents are given the opportunity to take full responsibility for their actions, stay out of the juvenile system, apologize to family, court and community, and have no juvenile record.

Some examples of the cases heard in Peer Court include: being a minor under the influence or in possession of drugs or alcohol; vandalism; petty theft; texting while driving and other similar offenses.

The Peer Court Respondent is tried by Peer Attorneys who present in front of a Peer Jury during the consequence phase of the court process. The Respondent must take full responsibility for the offense committed to take part in the program. The Jury, made up of high school students, will develop a Restorative Plan for the Respondent based on the facts of the case as presented by the Peer Attorneys. The Peer Jury is instructed to focus on a plan that will help rehabilitate the Respondent so that he or she will not commit another offense, and will give the Respondent the opportunity to restore his or her relationship with family and community.

Isadora Asch, Program lead, said: “As Program Director of Peer Court, I am delighted to be back in the Courtroom live! There is so much to learn from the program and I have had the pleasure for the last 24 years to work with so many outstanding youth who have participated in the various roles the program offers. I hope that more and more students become interested and wish to participate as we continue now to offer Peer Court in the Napa Courthouse as well as in the American Canyon City Hall.”

High school students who are interested in participating in, or learning more about, the Napa-American Canyon Peer Court can do so by emailing the program director, Isadora Asch, M.A. at Isadora.asch@countyofnapa.org.