



SOOTHING SOUNDS
Harpist comforts those in great pain. Page 6A



LONG MAY IT WAVE
State honors man who kept flag flying. Page 7A

Wednesday



The

Gleaner



September 18, 2013

HENDERSON, KENTUCKY ©

No. 224, 129th year

\$1.00

New program unites offenders, victims

By Frank Boyett
fboyett@thegleaner.com
270-831-8342

■ Plan geared for juveniles who've committed minor crimes

to law enforcement.

"She describes how she has lost sleep and that she's thought about quitting her job. She's concerned about her income. And Johnny has to face this. He's sitting there with his eyes getting real big. He didn't realize all the harm he had done."

The first words out the boy's mouth when it was his turn to speak, Thompson said, were "I'm sorry" and "What can I do

See PROGRAM, 8A

A new program operating out of the county attorney's office is having considerable success reconciling juvenile offenders with the victims of their crimes.

Henderson Fiscal Court heard all about it Tuesday during a presentation from Melody Thompson, coordinator of the Henderson County Victim Offender Conferencing Program, who

said it is geared more for kids who have committed relatively minor crimes. "We're just getting started," she said, noting the program began early this year, but "all the satisfaction reports that are coming back are very positive."

The program operates with the slogan, "Make it right," and Thompson likened it to the old days when a mother would grab

INSIDE

Court works on roads, creek. 3A

a recalcitrant youngster by the ear and march him across the street to talk with a neighbor about a broken window.

"The goal is to bring that juvenile offender together with their victim," she said. "In this process there is a place for the

victim at the table. The goal is to have a dialogue, a restorative dialogue ... that explores what happened, to discuss the impact of that crime, and to decide how to repair that harm."

Usually, she said, the juvenile has no idea of the effects of his or her actions. She told a fictional story about a school bus driver who overheard a boy threatening to shoot her, and reported it

PROGRAM from 1A

to make this right?"

That's what the two sides have to work out in every instance," she said. "A crime that happens always impacts more than just that person involved."

Her job, she explained, is to facilitate that conversation, write a report, and do follow-ups that may take up to a year and a half.

So far the program has had 36 juveniles referred to the program.

So how does the community benefit? "We know there are good ways to do things, especially with these young people who have not had very serious crimes. We're going to decrease the anti-social behavior, increase victim satisfaction and reduce court referrals."

County Attorney Steve Gold praised Thompson's work, saying it has helped reduce the number of Henderson County juveniles being housed in the Bowling Green detention facility.

"It's not cheap to send a juvenile down there," he said.

"If the underlying harm is not addressed we see those kids back. That's what this program is about: catch it early, get it stopped. It makes peace and understanding a lot more possible and hopefully keeps us from having kids going down that bad road."

“If the underlying harm is not addressed we see those kids back. That's what this program is about: catch it early, get it stopped. It makes peace and understanding a lot more possible and hopefully keeps us from having kids going down that bad road.”

Steve Gold, County Attorney

Reprinted with permission.

Copyright © 2013 The Gleaner 09/18/2013