

# Group Focuses On Building Bridges In The Community To Teach Youth To Avoid A Life Of Crime

Bridges of America recently joined Public Defender Mark Shirk in his Vision For Excellence Summer Camp to encourage wayward Jacksonville youth to make the right choices so that they don't end up behind bars as adults.

Joining the program, to give a motivational talk to the youngsters was Florida State Senator Tony Hill.

In 2010, the Law Offices of Public Defender Matt Shirk created a Vision for Excellence Summer Camp with the idea of "preventing some of our youth today from becoming our clients of tomorrow".

The mission of the program is to provide young people with educational resources, interaction with positive role models, self-esteem enhancing activities and community building opportunities which will result in good decision making skills and a desire to produce positive contributions to the community.

The program also strives to spark a passion in campers by exposing them to real life cases and situations the office deals with each day. One such interaction was when Jose' Martinez met with the juveniles to share his own story of getting caught up with crime.

Martinez, who is presently working to be a living example of reformation, told the group that he didn't know the consequences of illegal drugs such as marijuana until he learned the hard way. He described his arrest after being caught with the illegal substance in his vehicle. He said that because it was only his first offense, he was given a second chance at life by entering the Bridge program. He told those in the program that he wanted to help youth by speaking to them so that they won't get caught up in a similar situation.



Talking to the group of the juveniles, their parents, inmates from The Bridge, members of the Public Defender's office and volunteers, is Florida State Senator Tony Hill.



Residents of the Bridge, Jose' Martinez and G. Abrams.



Sen. Tony Hill, Octavius Holliday, Reggie Fullwood, Hugh A. Wilkinson, Attorney and Investigator Tommy Tyson.



Picture 1, (l to r). Assistant Public Defender Katy Harris, Eunice Barnum, Assistant Public Defender Melina Buncome-Williams and Chelsi P. Henry, Supervisor, Duval Soil and Water Conservation District Group 5

## REAL LIFE STORIES

**BLISS:** Young woman marries elderly rich doctor and they live a lavish lifestyle in a sprawling mansion with maid services, luxury cars and an airplane. **SORROW:** When she is 36, the doctor suffers a heart attack and dies at 70. **PROBLEM:** He had never divorced his first wife who flies in from Texas, takes control, liquidates and receives all assets, leaving the young woman penniless. **RESULT:** The young woman moves to an apartment, gets a job at a convenience store and takes the bus to work.

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(l to r). FL Representative Reggie Fullwood and Assistant State Attorney Octavius Holliday