

# Neosho High School Drug Court



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NEOSHO, MO.— High school can be a tough time for many students.

"I didn't really apply myself, really bitter towards everyone," states Cole Culp, Drug Court Graduate.

Being in this state of mind leads many teens to turn to drugs.

"Juveniles, their pre front cortex isn't developed. So, they're immature and that is why they make the stupid decisions," states Tim Perigo, Newton County Judge.

An issue that Newton County Judge, Tim Perigo says he wants to nip in the bud. That is why he teamed up with other agencies to create the Neosho High School Drug Court.

"Highly intensive, holding them accountable for their actions, but getting them the help they need. So, they don't end up being adult addicts basically," states Perigo.

A high school drug court is not only unique to the Four State area, but the entire State of Missouri.

"Law enforcement, the school, the court system, the children's division. All of these different entities working together to help these kids," states Dereck Price, School Resource Officer.

The program was created at the beginning of the last school year, administrators say they were finding more teens were using with each week. This year? They haven't had any.

"I think we probably still have drugs in this school, but I think we have significantly put a dent in that. Kids know it's not going to be swept under the rug, it's not going to be ignored," states Price.

The program consists of students being put under house arrest for one month, getting their parents involved with the recovery, and forcing them to appear before the judge regularly. The court is conveniently located in their own high school library. Graduates of the program, Jon Michael Kershaw and Cole Culp say they don't look at drug court as a form of punishment, but as a positive, life changing experience.

"I want to see their attitude in class with their teachers, I want to see their grades, their attendance, and I want to see what their interest is," states Perigo.

Culp and Kershaw are now honor students, heavily involved in extracurricular activities.

"It really was just something eye opening for me as an individual, independently that I could use to better myself," states Cole Culp.

"Theres a lot of kids who are doing better. They want to be better, they're not forced to be better," states Jon Michael Kershaw, Drug Court Graduate.

The drug court has not only made an impact on the students, but also administrators and their relationships with those who have gone through the program.

"They're not just students that I see every day. I call those guys friends because that is what they are. They've been through a lot and I've seen what they've been through, so it means a lot to me," states Price.

"I didn't feel so alone any more. I was surrounded by a group of people who wanted to see a difference in me," states Culp.

The high school drug court started with 35 students, now there are 20. Judges have traveled across Missouri to witness the Neosho program in action, because they are looking to implement something similar in their districts.