



Parents avoid jail by completing Project Rebuild program

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By Lisa DeNeal Post-Tribune correspondent August 13, 2014 10:28AM

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GARY — The Gary City Truancy Court Program graduated 13 parents during a ceremony Tuesday at the Gary Public Safety Facility, saving these moms a combined total of \$13,000 in fines and 2,340 days of time in the Lake County Jail because their children missed 10 unexcused days of school.

Project Rebuild is a 90-day program designed to reduce truancy among Gary students. It also gives parents and students a second chance in assuring students will no longer miss school, refocus on getting an education and develop a stronger relationship with their parents.

Municipal Court Judge Inga Lewis-Shannon said Project Rebuild is an alternative to being charged with failure to educate and parental neglect, which is a Class B misdemeanor that could result in a \$1,000 fine and 180 days in the Lake County Jail.

“We try not to get to where the parents pay for their children’s truancy with a charge and a record,” she said. “We, along with various agencies, work together with the parents and children to rebuild themselves as a family and for the children to rebuild themselves academically.”

Parents active in Project Rebuild attend parenting classes at the Indiana Parenting Institute founded and directed by Laura Wynn.

Wynn said she commends the parents who stepped up to participate in Project Rebuild and come to the parenting classes at Indiana Parenting Institute.

“I’ve been in your shoes as a parent. It’s not easy coming to these classes but when you come, we are not saying that you are bad parents because you are not. You came because you needed a different perspective in handling and communicating with your child,” Wynn said.

Project Rebuild has community partners in Clark Road Genesis Center, Indiana Parenting Institute and Gary Youth Service Bureau, organizations including ARISE, COFFY and DIVAS and therapist Lisa Johnson.

Lewis-Shannon worked with the children, having them read books and write book reports.

“This program is probably the one I get the most joy in participating. The children get assignments and they do research on colleges and what they would like to do and the response from them is incredible,” she said.

Ida Cook is a mother of five, but did the program when her son missed 10 days; the last day was a “snow day” when school actually was in session.

“I will not do that again. He will be going to school every single day,” she said. “I am a good parent and participating in Project Rebuild and going to classes at the Indiana Parenting Institute enhanced my parenting skills. I plan on being fully engaged in his life from here on.”

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