



Raised by the Courts: One Judge's Insight into Juvenile Justice

By Irene Sullivan

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A veteran judge shares her vision for ending the vicious cycle of child abuse and crime. When 19-year-old Leo Boatman was convicted of the brutal murders of two college students, he told the judge, "I can't offer an explanation because there is none". But Judge Irene Sullivan knew there had to be more to the story than just a senseless crime, and she was determined to discover the root cause of Boatman's behavior. Corresponding with him in prison, Judge Sullivan learned of the failures and abuses of every system Boatman had passed through, each intended to prevent such a devastating turn of events. Drawing on years of work with thousands of children, Judge Sullivan presents a plan for breaking the vicious cycle of child abuse and crime that causes such tragedies. Through eye-opening stories from both her own courtroom and the system at large, Judge Irene reveals what works for young people in jeopardy. The results are surprisingly optimistic: few would have guessed that the most successful programs are also among the most cost-effective and practical. Raised by the Courts will be a source of hope and clarity for those who care about ending the cycle of violent crime among the youngest and most vulnerable members of society.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Irene Sullivan is a Circuit Court Judge in the Unified Family Court, handling juvenile delinquency, dependency and domestic violence cases. She is a nationally-recognized speaker on juvenile justice and truancy matters and a consultant to the Florida government. She is a vice president of the National Truancy Prevention Association; a member of the Blueprint Commission to reform juvenile justice in Florida, and part of a statewide taskforce on Disproportionate Minority Contact. She serves on advisory boards of Stetson University College of Law and Barry University Law School, the Juvenile Welfare Board, Ounce of Prevention for Florida, Inc., and PACE Center for Girls. She is currently working with the MacArthur Foundation in a project to improve public defender's representation of juveniles in court. The recipient of the St. Petersburg Bar Association Judicial Appreciation Award, the Ben C. Willard Award from Stetson University College of Law and the Children's Justice Award from the Salvation Army, Irene is a frequent speaker at conferences, universities and non-profit organizations. Irene has been an adjunct professor of law at Stetson University College of Law and is working to establish a juvenile justice clinic at the law school.

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