

Pro Bono Champion: Margaret Burnham - Guilford County Teen Court

Related Professionals

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The Guilford County Teen Court is a local diversion program for youth offenders ages 6 to 17 whose behavior constitutes a misdemeanor violation of the law for Class I, II, or III misdemeanors and who are actively enrolled in an educational program. Being referred to participate in the program provides youth the opportunity to have their charge dismissed, not acquire a juvenile record, and learn from their mistakes. The Teen Court's workers and volunteers work tirelessly to create change in youth on a personal level by leading them to understand the consequences of their actions and learn about self and community responsibility.

It was this mission that resonated with Margaret Shea Burnham when she first volunteered to be a Guilford County Teen Court judge in 2008. For 11 years, Margaret has volunteered over 240 hours at court, happily taking the tougher cases with her knowledgeable and no non-sense approach. She is famous as the "Judge" who pauses the court cases to take both youth and their parents to the back hallway for a private meeting where attitudes quickly change. She is very serious about the substance and alcohol cases she hears, even taking on a case with 14 youth who chose to drink alcohol before and during prom. Margaret came prepared with laws, statistics and visuals to make sure each of them got a good look at the dangers of alcohol. It was a long, exhausting night, but all 14 youth completed Teen Court successfully, had no criminal record, graduated high school, and went on to college. Margaret truly believes in the mission of Teen Court and is always supportive of staff and volunteers and compassionate and encouraging to the youth that pass through the program.

Margaret Shea Burnham is a member in Nexsen Pruet's Greensboro, North Carolina office, where she concentrates her practice on commercial real estate transactions and litigation. She is a Board Certified Specialist in Real Property Law: Business, Commercial and

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Margaret is a recipient of the James E. Cross, Jr. Leadership Award from the North Carolina State Bar Board of Legal Specialization, an award given to a certified specialist who has taken an active leadership role in his or her practice area. Margaret is a leader in her community as well, having dedicated her time not only to the Guilford County Teen Court but also an interfaith retreat center. During the 15 year development of the St. Francis Springs Prayer Center she volunteered to assist with real estate matters and later took a position on the Board of Directors.

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