87R10185 BK-D

By:  A. Johnson of Harris H.R. No. 168

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, More than a decade ago, Harris County began creating specialty courts that are designed to rehabilitate and reduce recidivism in juvenile offenders; and

WHEREAS, The first of these courts, a mental health program that was renamed Court 360, was established in January 2009; the court was intended to address the unique needs of youth with mental health conditions, but it has since adopted a comprehensive approach where participants receive individualized guidance in various areas of their lives, including family relationships, academic performance, and community engagement; this court is currently presided over by Judge Dena Fisher; and

WHEREAS, The Sobriety Over Addiction and Relapse Court, or SOAR Court, was created in July 2010; presided over by Judge Michelle Moore and Associate Judge Eric Andell, it utilizes a collaborative multidisciplinary model to help juvenile offenders overcome drug and alcohol dependence; as with Court 360, participants in the SOAR Court program are provided with an individualized, research-based treatment plan with the objective of improving outcomes by promoting healthier family communication and interaction; and

WHEREAS, In August 2011, the county established what would later be known as the Creating Advocacy Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court; overseen by Judge Leah Shapiro, CARE Court was developed to assist young women and girls who had been exploited in commercial sex trafficking, but it later began accepting boys, young men, and transgender youth as well; the program employs a clinically driven, multidisciplinary team, with a comprehensive focus on resolving trauma and other underlying issues that contribute to at-risk and delinquent behavior; and

WHEREAS, The newest specialty court, GRIP Court, was founded in October 2011; officially known as the Gang Recidivism Intervention Program, the court is presided over by Judge Natalia Oakes and Associate Judge William Thursland; its purpose is to reduce gang association by promoting pro-social behaviors, redirecting youth to healthier alternatives, and improving family relationships; participants are closely monitored and receive individualized treatment plans, which include mentorship, educational assistance, and other means of support; and

WHEREAS, Each of these programs has played a vital role in Harris County's efforts to curb delinquency, tackle the root causes of criminal behavior, and offer at-risk youth a pathway to a better, brighter future, and it is a privilege to recognize those who have devoted their time and expertise to these important goals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas Legislature hereby honor the alternative juvenile justice courts of Harris County for their 10 years of invaluable service to the community and extend to all those involved with these programs sincere best wishes for continued success.