

August 9, 2013

Polk County Supervisor
Polk County Administration Building
111 Court Ave
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Supervisor,

We appreciated the opportunity to express our concerns last week at your meeting. We listened carefully to the remarks made and want to clarify what we believe are some misconceptions about our juvenile justice efforts:

- We agree with the Sheriff and the County Attorney's office that many juvenile offenders (particularly violent, repeat offenders) need to be dealt with through our court system and that filing a delinquency petition on a juvenile is not necessarily a bad thing.
- We believe all juveniles need to be held accountable for their mistakes, no matter how small.
- We know how much the county and the courts are already doing to help juveniles. That's never been in dispute among our constituency.
- We believe the best form of accountability for non-violent, non-repeat juvenile offenders is through restorative justice practices that happen outside of the courthouse. Restorative justice, properly understood and implemented, holds the perpetrator accountable, restores justice for the victim and repairs the damage to the community. Everyone wins. That's our goal.

Two things are a going concern for us that are still not being addressed directly in our current public debate:

- 1) The upward trend in juvenile petition filings and detention holds over the last two years with no corresponding increase in juvenile arrests
- 2) The disproportionate impact that is having on children of color

Those numbers are documented in the Iowa Division of Human Rights - CJJP Study (enclosed) and they are not fabricated, inaccurate or in dispute. What seems to be in dispute is whether or not those trends represent a problem that needs to be fixed. We see it as a problem that will require all of us to adequately address it.

We are in the process of arranging a follow up meeting with the County Attorney and his staff. We look forward to finding ways to solve this problem in collaboration with the county and the courts.

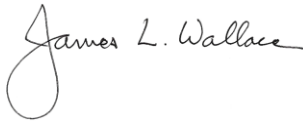
We will be in touch soon to arrange a time to meet to gain your perspective.

Sincerely,



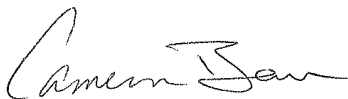
Rev. Dr. Brigitte Black
Bethel AME Church
515-266-1871

Rev. Denny Coon
Walnut Hills United Methodist Church
515-270-9226



Rev. Dr. James Wallace
Central Presbyterian Church

Rev. Bill Cotton
Grace United Methodist Church (Retired)



Rev. Cameron Barr
Plymouth UCC Church



Rev. David Sickelka
Urbandale UCC Church

Rev. Benjamin Bell
Present Truth Church

Cc Bill McCarthy, Polk County Sheriff
John Sarcone, Polk County Attorney

Enc. Iowa Division of Human Rights CJJP Study