

**NEWS  
RELEASE**

May 29, 2012

CITY OF PADUCAH, KY



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**New Episode of *Your City at Work* on Government Channel 11  
Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program**

**PADUCAH, KY**—“The kids who are in the program walk away with a better understanding of how they have affected the community. I think they have a better understanding of how their behavior has consequences and maybe how they can modify that behavior to do something more positive,” says Family Court Judge Cynthia Sanderson. Judge Sanderson is one of the partners involved in the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program of Paducah-McCracken County. In March 2011, the City of Paducah Fire Department along with several partners launched the program with the goal of educating youth about the dangers of firesetting. On the latest episode of *Your City at Work*, Public Information Officer Pam Spencer provides an overview of the program.

In 2010, Paducah Fire Marshal Greg Cherry and Paducah Police Officer Cindy Neihoff started exploring the program by attending a course in Dallas, Texas. The next step was to gather community partners for the program and then coordinate the 40-hour training for the partners through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Cherry says, “You needed representatives from different agencies to make this work, and you needed cooperation from the court system to use it as a diversion program.” To date, 32 juveniles have completed the program with none of them as repeat offenders.

After a youth is identified as a firesetter either by the child’s school, family, fire department, or other means, the child and his or her family undergo an evaluation at Necco. Necco, a private organization that focuses on foster children and general community based services for youth, partners with the Juvenile Firesetter Program by conducting a comprehensive fire evaluation on the youth and family. Program Director Rhonda Riley says, “We go through a list of questions that are on this evaluation from the fire incident that led them to be referred to the program, but also on family history, if they have moved, how many times have they moved, have there been any traumas in the family, and any kind of school problems, either behavioral or academic. All of these things are assessed.” After the evaluation, Necco scores the results and places the child in one of three risk categories: low, moderate, or definite. Low risk children then undergo at least two educational courses while the other risk categories involve four educational classes. A definite risk child also will be referred to mental health services.



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Pam Spencer, Public Information Officer

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Paducah Firefighter Ronnie Hines leads many of the educational classes. Hines says, "When we have class, we usually have the parent or caregiver in there with us. We teach about home safety and the consequences that firesetting could cause." The youth are given homework assignments including interviews with community members. Also, various partners make presentations including Family Court Judge Cynthia Sanderson. Judge Sanderson says, "Mostly I share with them something that I hope will affect them on a personal level, but more than that I will tell them about the law. Sometimes I tell them how people are hurt or injured by fires and explain some of my first hand experiences through the court system." Youth are provided a certificate at the end of the session.

If anyone has a question about the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program, contact Paducah Fire Marshal Greg Cherry at 444-8522. Program partners include the Paducah Police and Fire Departments, ChildWatch, Paducah and McCracken County Public Schools, Four Rivers Behavioral Health, Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, McCracken County Juvenile Detention Center, Paducah Area Chapter of the American Red Cross, Western Baptist Hospital, Lourdes Hospital, the McCracken County Court System, and Necco.

*Your City at Work* can be seen on Government 11, the governmental access channel of the City of Paducah. The episode can be viewed on Government 11 starting Wednesday, May 30 at 10:00 p.m. It also airs Friday at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday at 4:00 p.m. View daily program information by watching the informational slides airing on the Channel 11 bulletin board. The episode also is online at [www.paducahky.gov](http://www.paducahky.gov) and the various social media outlets for the City of Paducah including Youtube and Facebook. Check the website for program information, videos, news releases, and broadcast schedules.

*Your City at Work* is hosted and produced by Pam Spencer, Public Information Officer for the City of Paducah through the television production facilities at West Kentucky Community and Technical College. For more information about *Your City at Work* or other Government 11 programming, call Tom Butler, WKCTC Television Production Coordinator, at 534-3208 or Pam Spencer at 444-8669.

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