



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Judiciary Marks the 10th Year of Jen & Dave Program, Launches New Web Site to Protect Pennsylvania's Children

HARRISBURG, PA, October 22, 2007 – To mark the 10th year of the Jen & Dave Program, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) today is launching a new program Web site, www.jendaveprogram.us, aimed at protecting Pennsylvania's children by making it easier for parents to obtain criminal information for other persons involved in their child custody case.

When the Jen & Dave Program was established in the fall of 1997, it was the nation's first statewide, automated telephone system for providing criminal charge information for individuals involved in child custody cases. Today the program continues to offer the criminal charge information to those who register for the original telephone toll line. In addition the new Jen & Dave Web site directs users to online criminal case docket sheets provided by the AOPC.

“With a few keystrokes on a computer,” said Judy Souleret, Jen & Dave Program Coordinator, “this Web site offers anyone with Internet access a quick and free way to get criminal case information throughout Pennsylvania – information that can help protect our children. We encourage all parents in child custody cases to utilize this valuable tool to make informed decisions regarding their child's safety.

“The AOPC is committed to making court information readily available to the public,” Souleret added. Visitors to the Web site can find links to Pennsylvania's criminal case docket sheets, including case information filed with Pennsylvania's magisterial district judges, the Philadelphia Municipal Court and the courts of common pleas.

The Jen & Dave Program is named after Jennifer and David Snead, the deceased children of Lynn (Snead) Shiner. On Christmas Eve 1994, the children, ten and eight years old, were stabbed to death by their father, who then took his own life. Mrs. Shiner, who was complying with a custody order by allowing the children to visit their father, was unaware of stalking charges filed against her ex-husband three weeks earlier. With this information, Mrs. Shiner could have petitioned the court to modify her ex-husband's visitation rights to protect her children from potential violence.

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At the news conference to introduce the Jen & Dave's Law, Mrs. Shiner said, "If, by making this change, we save one life, our efforts have been successful." She said years later during a presentation a grandmother approached her, hugged her and said, "The Jen and Dave line saved my grandchildren's lives." Today Mrs. Shiner says, "The feelings those words invoked were 'indescribable.'

"The Jen and Dave's Law has been a step in the right direction to raise a red flag for parents and give them the opportunity to be proactive when it comes to the protection of their children," Mrs. Shiner added. "With the Jen & Dave Program and new resources made available by the AOPC, parents now have information at their fingertips to help ensure the safety of our children. They deserve it!"

The Jen & Dave Program toll line provides information on charges that have been filed after applicants have been registered in the system. By law, the system provides charge information on 19 offenses including homicide, aggravated assault, terroristic threats, harassment and stalking, kidnapping, unlawful restraint, false imprisonment, rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault, indecent exposure, arson, incest, endangering the welfare of children, sexual abuse of children and contempt for violation of a Protection from Abuse order or agreement. The AOPC's criminal case docket sheets, which became available for all of Pennsylvania's criminal courts earlier this year, provide information regarding all criminal charges filed in the state from serious felony offenses to minor traffic violations.

A criminal charge or conviction may be a basis for a change in child custody. Charge information specific to any of the 19 offenses reportable through the Jen & Dave Program requires the court to hold the hearing expeditiously if a parent files a petition to change custody based on criminal charges filed against another party to a child custody proceeding.

Parents, or their attorneys, who are interested in registration in the Jen & Dave Program, which provides information through a toll line, may complete an application, available at www.jendaveprogram.us, and submit a notarized copy to the Prothonotary's office in the county where the custody case was filed. Once registration is completed, parents can call 1-900-226-3120 at any time – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – to inquire about charge information for parties involved in child custody case. Each call costs 50 cents a minute with a three-minute, \$1.50 minimum charge. For more information on the Jen & Dave Program, please visit the Web site or contact AOPC through their toll-free line, 1-866-JEN-DAVE (536-3283).

Efforts to provide online criminal data to the public join other programs of the Supreme Court designed to modernize and improve the court system throughout Pennsylvania. Those initiatives include, among others, programs that are designed to improve court security; provide trained court interpreters; assist in the establishment of specialty—or problem-solving—courts, such as drug and DUI courts; assist children and families in the courts; and train judges in general and specialized areas of jurisprudence, using the most advanced educational techniques available.

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