

Frank Morea tireless in aiding young offenders



Photo by Tyrone Walker

Frank Morea works with Crime Stoppers and a Juvenile Arbitration Program.

Frank Morea isn't one to stop and consider his accomplishments, not when there's still so much to do.

Tell him that his peers credit him for redefining his role as chairman of Crime Stoppers of the Lowcountry by reaching out to other agencies, and he'll say there's room still to grow.

Bring up the fact that as a volunteer he created a computer program that allows the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Juvenile Arbitration Program to process, track and study 1,400 first-time-offender cases a year, and he'll point out that the speed of the system hasn't slowed the number of children committing crimes.

"As great as it is, it seems like the juveniles never stop coming," he said. "We might find a way to process them quicker, but they keep getting in trouble."

The other reason the 39-year-old Charleston resident doesn't like to look back is because he simply doesn't have time.

He stays busy maintaining the Crime Stoppers Web site he started, tinkering with the program he created for the solicitor's office and working as a certified arbitrator to help keep the children from repeating their offenses.

That doesn't include the job he actually gets paid for — he's a photography teacher at Trident Tech — or his new gig as the manager of a rock band.

"I guess if you had to describe him in one word it would be 'driven,'" said Charleston Police Cpl. Fred Bowie, the department's Crime Stoppers coordinator. "He continues to persist even in the face of bad circumstances we deal with from time to time."

"This guy goes non-stop," said Noah Moore, the director of Juvenile Diversion Programs, who oversees the arbitration program.

Morea is one of about 73 volunteers who serve as a judge and jury for first-time juvenile offenders. They meet with the offender, the victims and the arresting officer to come up with a

way to atone for the offender's mistake. The offense is wiped clean if the offender admits to the crime and completes a series of requirements set by the arbitrator.

The program has grown immensely in the past seven years, with only 9 percent of the juveniles offending again. Moore said Morea's help has been invaluable.

"Because of all the things he's helped us with, we were able to expand the program into Berkeley County," Moore said. "We did that without raising a budget or hiring a person. That tells you just how much Frank has done for us."

Morea also donated the computer program to seven other solicitor's offices that wanted a copy. Moore said the program is worth between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

Not bad for someone who entered his adult life not sure what he wanted to do. Born in the Bronx, N.Y., Morea moved to Charleston with his family when he was 15. He graduated from Porter Gaud High School, attended Mercer College in Macon, Ga., but then took a break, as he put it.

"I was just trying to figure out what to do, so I did everything," Morea said.

He worked in retail for a while and saved up money to go back to school. He eventually earned degrees in criminal justice, psychology and counseling.

He discovered a passion for volunteer work when he was introduced to the fledgling arbitration program in 2000 while pursuing an associate's degree.

Morea devised the computer program when he saw the staff storing files on the floor and typing reports on a typewriter. When Moore took over the office a year later, he asked Morea if the program could be expanded.

"I said, 'Sure,' " Morea said. "From there it kept growing and growing and growing."

He joined Crime Stoppers at Moore's prompting and has served as the chairman for more than two years.

"At some point I realized I just wanted something better to do, and this ended up being better," Morea said. "It serves a greater purpose."

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