

Juvenile Assessment Center  
of Lee County  
2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Fort Myers, FL 33901  
(239) 258-3450  
www.swfljac.org

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# The JAC Perspective

*Happy Holidays from the JAC Staff!*



*The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.*

Free drug testing kits for your youth are available at the JAC 24 hours a day.

**Law enforcement should call ahead to**

**258-3461  
or 258-3471**

**when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC or to confirm that a youth is eligible for a civil citation.**



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

## We Don't Do "Scared Straight"

Sometimes the JAC receives phone calls from parents who are at their wits end. The parents describe a child who isn't listening to them and is spiraling out of control. They've called the JAC because they want someone to "scare him straight." "Scared Straight" programs take at-risk kids to jails or prisons in an attempt to scare them out of a life of crime. They are based on the premise that realistic and often aggressive depictions of jail or prison life will cause a youth not to commit crimes due to fear of incarceration. Study after study has shown that, not only are scared straight-type programs ineffective, but that kids who go through them are more likely to commit crimes compared with youth who receive no intervention at all. You read



that right. Scared straight-type programs don't work. In fact, they actually increase the likelihood that a youth will end up in the juvenile justice system. (It's not clear why they don't work. There are a number of theories why, but that is beyond the scope of this article.) The message that scared straight-type programs have been

proven to not work has not been getting out to the general public. These programs remain popular among parents who are at their wits end and want a "quick fix." It hasn't helped that the A&E network has helped to glamorize these types of programs with its "Beyond Scared Straight" series, now in its eighth season. If a youth is spiraling downward and his or her  
*(Continued page 2)*

## Boating Accidents Are Both a State and Local Concern

With its miles of coastline, many inland waterways, and mild climate, it is no surprise that boating is a popular activity in Florida. With nearly a million vessels, Florida leads the nation in the number of recreational vessels registered in a state. The down side of this is that Florida also leads the nation in the most recreational boating accidents and the highest number of boating fatalities in the nation annually. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)\*, 67% of the reportable boating accidents in Florida during



the 2013 calendar year occurred in eleven Florida counties (out of 67 counties). Lee County was one of those counties, with the sixth highest number of boating accidents in the state. There were 736 reportable boating accidents and 62 boating related fatalities in Florida in 2013. This total includes eight missing persons who at the end of 2013 had not been located or accounted for. Their circumstances suggest that death or serious injury had occurred. The FWC reported that many of the deaths were due to victims falling overboard and drowning and that a large number of the  
*(Continued page 2)*

\*<http://myfwc.com/media/2804464/2013-BoatingStatistics.pdf>

## We Don't Do "Scared Straight" (cont.)

parents have lost control, it often is a complicated problem with complicated origins. The solution is probably going to take some time and most likely will require some professional help. Some parents are pretty disappointed when they find out that we don't do a scared straight-type program at the JAC. What we will do is

assist parents in getting the treatment and community connections they and their youth need to be successful for the long term. For information about community resources available for youth and families in Lee County, visit the JAC's website at [www.swfljac.org](http://www.swfljac.org) and click on our Community Resource Guide.



## Boating Accidents Are Both a State and Local Concern (cont.)

deaths could have been prevented if the victims had worn life jackets. Among the boating accidents in Florida in 2013, 27% of the operators or occupants could not swim. 68% were not wearing a personal floatation device at the time of the accident. Among the boat operators involved in Florida boating accidents in 2013, 53% had not had any boater education. State law requires anyone who was born on or after January 1, 1988 to successfully complete an approved boating safety course

and obtain a Boating Safety Education Identification Card issued by the FWC in order to legally operate a motorboat of 10 horsepower or greater. The Boating Safety Education Identification Card is proof of successful completion of the educational requirements and is valid for life. The FWC website provides information about approved boater safety education courses and information on how to get the ID card at <http://myfwc.com/boating/safety-education/courses/>. One option

for completing boating safety education for youth is through the Florida Virtual School's Outdoor Education Class. It is free to students in grades 9 - 12, ages 12 - 18. By completing the class students earn a Florida Boating Safety Education ID Card. They also earn a Hunter Education Certificate and 0.5 high school credit for physical education. Go to the Florida Virtual School's website at [www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net) to find out more information about the Outdoor Education Class.

## Youth Arrests Down in in Lee County in 2014

There were 2,930 youth arrests in Lee County in 2014. This was the lowest it has been since the JAC began tracking youth arrests in 2004.



Total Youth Arrests in Lee County, 2006 - 2014

