

# Richland County Court of Common Pleas

**General Division**  
50 PARK AVENUE EAST  
MANSFIELD, OHIO 44902

JUDGE JAMES DeWEESE  
419-774-5567

JUDGE BRENT N. ROBINSON  
419-774-5570

MAGISTRATE GARRY D. DALBEY  
419-774-5569

MAGISTRATE ANDREA CLARK  
419-774-8303

September 8, 2017

Representative Mark J. Romanchuk  
77 South High Street  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: *Reformers Unanimous*

Dear Representative Romanchuk:

I have been asked to write you concerning my experiences with the value of Christ centered recovery programs.

I have been a general division Common Pleas Court judge for 27 years. During that time I have presided over more than 10,000 felony criminal cases. I've seen what work and what doesn't work in reducing recidivism or repeat crimes by these offenders.

What I've noticed is that the most effective programs in reducing repeat crimes are those which are Christ-centered or faith-based. That is because it is hard to change bad behavior without changing the heart and nothing changes the heart like the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

A program that is very valuable to us here is the Reformers Unanimous program. I first learned of it through a local chapter in Shelby, Ohio at Calvary Baptist Church. Their program is aimed at breaking the chains of addictive behavior.


Addictive behavior is hard to break, whether the addiction is to anger and violence, to drugs, to pornography, to gambling or to other unproductive behavior.

Dan Gates who runs the program there has made Reformers Unanimous an important component of our court's effort to change behavior. He attends every session of my reentry court. In reentry court, I meet for one year with more serious offenders after they are released from prison. He attends every session of drug court. He offers to help out offenders, he meets weekly with a group of our offenders, and he communicates with and assists our probation officers regarding the offenders with whom he works.

In addition, Reformers – like the Teen Challenge Program – also operates residential treatment facilities. I accompanied Mr. Gates to a visit to the residential program that Reformers Unanimous operates in Hammond, Indiana for men and for women. Several of our offenders have benefitted from that program. It has been life changing for a number of them.

In sum, Representative Romanchuk, if we want to change Ohio offenders from criminal behavior, we can do nothing more important than encouraging Christ centered or faith-based programs. That's what works.

Sincerely,



James DeWeese

JD/kms