



Jail committee throws possible lifeline to schools

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PARAGOULD - Several people floating in the water looking for a way to safety are willing to grab on to the big wooden plank that was presented to them Thursday evening.

Second Judicial District Circuit Judge David Goodson used the analogy that he along with Juvenile Intake Officers Sue Clayton and Lynn Morris, Greene County Judge Jesse Dollars, justices of the peace and school officials, such as Marmaduke Student Resource Officer Shane Martin and Greene County Tech Truancy Officer Ursela Bruner, were all floating in the water looking for a way to alleviate truancy issues with juveniles.

Thursday evening, they were presented with an electronic monitoring bracelet system from e-cell.com that should alleviate some problems.

All participants were willing to see how they worked. Dollars requested they use the system which will be at no cost to the county. All of the cost is absorbed by the person sentenced to wearing the bracelet. This will include a \$100 set-up fee along with \$13 per day to wear the Passive GPS receiver, a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-per-week monitoring system.

The GPS tracking system will be able to monitor the juvenile and pin-point where he or she is within 3 feet of the location at all times.

Keyton said if the juvenile is to be at a certain location at a certain time, the monitoring device will be able to determine if he or she is or is not. The device will be able to track the juvenile as well as he or she is not where he or she needs to be. Anytime the juvenile is tracked doing something he or she shouldn't be doing, it is marked as an offensive. If he or she does not check in with e-cell by a certain time, it is an offense.

All officials noted that these juveniles cannot pay the fines they have now. Kris Keyton with e-cell.com said that he has observed individuals who have thousands of dollars worth of fines, but when they are faced with going to jail or paying to wear the monitoring system, they will come up with the money anyway they can. Keyton also explained they would set up payment plans to assist them.

Keyton noted this would be the first time e-cell.com was used to monitor juveniles over a truancy problem.

While county officials budgeted \$50,000 for juvenile detention, the county has gone significantly over that budgeted amount. Officials estimated the county would spend \$100,000 on housing juveniles at the Craighead County Juvenile Detention Center. The main reason so many juveniles are going to the CCJDC is truancy.

Martin wondered what kind of deterrent wearing the ankle bracelet would be to these juveniles.

"I feel they will see it as a badge of courage. What kind of deterrent is this? ... I had a fourth-grader go to juvenile detention and came back saying they never wanted to go through that again."

JP Dean Wooldridge said when considering all that parents would have to pay for the house arrest option, the parents will make sure their child gets to school and stays there.

"When you consider the \$100 set up fee, the \$13 per day ... this could add up to an \$800 bill these parents will receive. When they see this, they will have a conversation with their child."

Dollars said, "Something has got to at least be tried. ... Let's try this and see how this works. I have to believe this will help somehow."

While Goodson presides over the next session of Greene County Juvenile Court, Judge Lee Fergus was to preside over today's session. Goodson said he would discuss testing the e-cell.com system as soon as possible with Fergus.

How long the juvenile is sentenced to wearing the device and how many offenses he or she can have before coming back before the court is all at the judge's discretion