Matt Provencher

High School: New Bedford High School

College: University of Massachusetts, Amherst, B.A., Political Science and Sociology.

Law School: Roger Williams University School of Law, J.D., *magna cum laude*.



Career: Attorney, DeLuca & Weizenbaum, Ltd., Providence, RI.

How did Youth Court prepare you for college or career: Youth Court helped prepare me for my career by giving me an opportunity to appreciate the magnitude of participating in the justice system. It was no small thing to step into a proceeding and speak on behalf of the Commonwealth or a young person who had wronged someone. It was a preview of the responsibility I would assume as a practicing attorney; if I had not been a part of Youth Court, I would never have had any idea what it would be like to stand up for my clients in court today. It was a tremendous responsibility, and it taught me to do my best to rise up to that responsibility on behalf of the people I represent.

Two skills from Youth Court: Two things that really stand out as unique skills that a person can gain from Youth Court are 1) the ability to ask questions, and 2) the ability to evaluate documents critically. Questioning is a primary skill for lawyers; it’s also a skill that everyone should have the opportunity to develop. Learning how to ask questions is an exercise in learning how to get information in front of a jury: what does the jury need to hear a witness say? How to get information from someone, in a comprehensible, understandable fashion, is not a skill that is in the general education curriculum for most high school students. Nor is it applicable solely to a courtroom. Whether it’s at work, in a courtroom, in a city or town meeting, or in a classroom pursuing higher education, knowing how to ask the right question, and get the information you need, is an important skill for a person who wants to be well rounded and an active citizen. There just aren’t many other places to learn how to do that in high school, where you’re far more likely to be questioned than questioning. Document evaluation is another thing that I would not have known where to learn save for Youth Court. In my life, I have to quickly look at, decipher, and understand documents I’ve never seen before. And that started happening not long after I left high school. Youth Court prepares students to look at official reports, records, and documents, find the information they need, and piece together events. I might not have had the opportunity to learn whether I even could do that if I hadn’t had the chance to do so while a Youth Court volunteer.

Favorite memory: I would like to say that one memory in particular stands out, but to be perfectly honest, my memories of Youth Court are of one long, rewarding, and happy time. I met incredible people at Youth Court: other volunteers, the students we worked with, attorneys and public figures from the community, and, more than anyone else, the administrators of Youth Court. I found lifelong mentors and good friends. My favorite memories of Youth Court are everything I remember about it.