

News >> Top Stories

## Keeping youth out of prison

Print Page

By **TAYLOR KUYKENDALL**  
Staff Writer

Published: Saturday, November 14, 2009 9:46 PM CST

Increasing parental involvement, local officials say, is the key to keeping children out of trouble and jail.

"Parents need to sit down and talk with them to find out if they are doing drugs. Be a parent, don't be their brother or sister," Greenwood Police Chief Henry Purnell said Saturday at a workshop hosted by the Greenwood Mentoring Group.

The event was called, "From the Cradle to the Penitentiary."

Purnell said to watch out for signs of drug activity, such as strange behavior or if the child is able to purchase new things without the parents' support.

"Many young people in gangs find that the gang is more of a family than the family is," Purnell said.

He said the police department should be looked at as a tool for the community.

"We don't want to lock your kids up," Purnell said. "They aren't going to learn anything there."

Mayor Carolyn McAdams said the kids need to stay in school if they want to stay out of jail. She offered a warning to Greenwood's children about conditions during incarceration.

"They don't have name brand clothes in jail. You won't be walking around in Nike tennis shoes in prison," she said.

Leflore County Youth Court Judge Kevin Adams said Greenwood needs to regain a sense of family and community to combat juvenile delinquency.

"Help your neighbor," Adams said. "If you have a friend in trouble, reach out to them, but don't go down the same path they have."

Leflore County Justice Court Judge Carlos Palmer took a different approach to his speech, asking the children to assess their own goals, what's important to them, their attitude and who they are.

"You are the sum total of your experiences," Palmer told the youth. "Everything you do is a part of who you are."



Leflore County Judge Carlos Palmer holds up a photo of Lil Wayne, a popular rap artist, and tells parents many of their children know who he is and are more likely to aspire to be like him than President Barack Obama or Oprah Winfrey. Palmer spoke Saturday at a workshop hosted by the Greenwood Mentoring Group at Greenwood Leflore Hospital. Photo by Taylor Kuykendall.

[x] Close Window