

Fernando Escobar

Fescobaradq06@gmail.com

(907)654-9627

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Influences in My Life

My name is Fernando Escobar, and I am a student at Kodiak High School. Before I was born in 2006, my family were immigrants from El Salvador. My father and sister first arrived on Kodiak Island in the early 2000s. My mother soon followed a year later. My parents are seasonal workers who are employed in the local canneries. I joined the Kodiak Island Borough School District during kindergarten and attended Main Elementary. Over those 6 years, I learned the core subjects and gained valuable friendships that have lasted to this day. When I entered Kodiak Middle School, I was shy and nervous, then in 7th grade, I found my footing. I began my career in “service” as the 7th grade student representative.

Over the last 4 to 6 years, I have experienced amazing opportunities that have made me involved with my school district and community. I have particularly taken an interest in an organization called Kodiak Teen Court. I am currently the Board of Directors President and a judge for the organization. Kodiak Teen Court is a nonprofit organization that utilizes Restorative Justice for juvenile delinquents. The juveniles are represented and judged by their youth peers. Teen Court uses youth attorneys who are trained in basic constitutional rights and Alaska legal practices. Restorative Justice has proven to succeed in restoring offenders and victims. Teen Court utilizes it to prevent repeated criminal behavior and create a productive citizen.

My involvement with Kodiak Teen Court has inspired me to seek a law degree. To pursue that goal, I need an undergraduate degree. I have been accepted at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to pursue a science degree in biology. Biological Sciences has been an interesting subject that has crossed my mind. I have a particular interest in microbiology which studies viruses, diseases, bacteria, and fungi. I also have an interest in the sub-topic of environmental sciences, such as ecosystems. However, my biology degree would be the stepping stone for my goal of law.

Kodiak Teen Court allowed me to be creative and responsible. It taught me what morality, ethics, responsibility, and leadership can look like, and how law affects people’s lives. As a judge, I have presided over many cases and given my judgment and opinion to the relevant

case. This is where I am looked upon by my peers, and specifically, the defendant. I always try to explain why I chose this over that and connect with the defendant. By incorporating accountability and humility, people will listen and follow.

Besides serving on the bench, I have served as a prosecutor and defense attorney. As a prosecutor, I have learned to uphold the Constitution of Alaska and the United States, and the mission of Restorative Justice. The prosecution works to maintain competency development, community safety, and accountability in the sentencing of a defendant. I try to be unique and meet each criterion under Restorative Justice, an example I can share was the recommendation of a defendant receiving their CPR certificate. The defendant had been a Minor in Possession of tobacco, primarily a nicotine product known as a vape pen. My team requested that the defendant take a CPR training course; not only would the defendant learn how valuable the lungs are, but they could save a life in the future. Being a defense attorney, the experience is always unique and fulfilling. The defendant, or client, is an interesting person, and every client has their challenges. I have advocated for my clients in every way that I can. In one of my cases, I negotiated with the prosecution and advocated for my client to incorporate anger management into their counseling. My defense team was concerned about the behavior of my client, and we felt that our client needed to receive expanded counseling. By helping the youth of Kodiak, I have gained a passion for service to others. This is my motivating factor to help those in need and pursue an education that will make a difference.

Beyond Kodiak Teen Court, I have served in many different organizations, and I have been a leader within a few. One of my proudest achievements was becoming the Kodiak High School Student Body President. My involvement within KIBSD and the community of Kodiak has inspired me to pursue an education where change can happen, by obtaining a law degree, I will strive for success and progressive change.