

Dr. Dave Roush

President – National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA)
1990-1992



Time with grandchildren at Wrigley Field

Travels . . . and more travels

Dr. Dave Roush started his career in juvenile justice in 1971 as a childcare worker in a local court-operated juvenile detention center. He spent some years counseling in a maximum secure treatment facility in Nashville, Tennessee and later was the Superintendent of a treatment facility in Michigan for 19 years. From there he did some grant work and then moved on to work at Michigan State University. He has served as a compliance monitor for the Civil Rights Division of the US Department of Justice. Most recently, he has worked closely with others behind the scenes through NJDA.

In 1978 Dr. Roush became a member of the National Juvenile Detention Association through his involvement at the Michigan Juvenile Detention Association. He believed that moving from the state level to the national level was a logical move for him. When he became President of NJDA, his main objective was working towards acquiring a voice in the national conversation about juvenile justice. His focus as President was in two areas. The first, on a macro-level, was trying to change the perception of what juvenile detention is. He wanted to show the public that the individuals who work in this field taking their commitment to youth and the community seriously and that they are well educated and trained. The second and more micro focus was the training and education provided to line staff members to help them become prepared to work with youth in this unique environment of juvenile detention and corrections.

Dr. Roush was also attentive to the external ideological forces at play during his time as President. The public perception of what juvenile detention was and what it should be were disparate across the country. The popular emphasis on incarceration had resulted in overcrowding in many poorly built facilities. Dr. Roush saw a need to help reorient the public opinion.

Since his time as President, there have been many milestones for juvenile detention nationally. One in particular that he mentioned is the Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, which focuses nationally on eliminating the problem of overcrowding. He also mentioned that there has been a drop in the juvenile arrest rates.

He shares the concern of several of his past and present colleagues about continued funding for NJDA and sustainability of the organization.

We can see from the hard work and progress achieved by Dr. Roush that NJDA has come a long way and there are high hopes that this progress will continue.