

Proven program may help Santa Clara County juveniles

Molly O'Neal's op-ed, "Juvenile justice reform is working despite crime spike" (Opinion, Jan. 24) is helpful in explaining the latest reforms that are being used in Santa Clara County with some success.

New Zealand has been using Family Group Conferencing in many of its juvenile justice cases with great success. Santa Clara County is already using this program in its dependency system dealing with abused and neglected children with amazing outcomes that help families and children.

The conferencing system uses an experienced trainer with family, friends and county partners to develop a plan of support to avoid the removal of the child to foster care or another placement.

A similar system could be used with juveniles. While potentially time-consuming and expensive, it is cheaper than the use of confinement programs and hopefully would avoid costly recidivism.

It is time to give this program a try in our county as well.

— *Eugene M. Hyman, Santa Clara County Superior Court judge, retired, Los Altos*