

## CREATIVE PUNISHMENTS



In February 2015, the Ohio teenager was found guilty of theft for not paying a \$100 taxi fare for a 30-mile ride from Cleveland to Painesville. Judge Mike Cicconetti offered her the choice of spending 30 days in prison or walking 30 miles. She chose walking, which took 48 hours, but she said she was happy that she didn't have to go to prison.

Judge Mike Cicconetti from Ohio, USA, was fed up with seeing the same faces in his courtroom again and again. For example, people accused of speeding near schools were fined a large amount of money and their driving licences were taken away for ninety days but that didn't stop them from doing it again. And then one day the judge decided to give the offenders a choice between losing their licence for ninety days or losing it for a shorter period and spend one day working as a school crossing guard. The drivers who spent a day helping schoolchildren across the street never appeared in his courtroom for speeding again.

He made a man who shouted 'Pigs' at some police officers stand in the street with real pigs and with a sign that read 'This is not a police officer'.



Michelle Murray abandoned some kittens in a forest in wintertime and many of them died later. She expected to get a fine or a short prison sentence but instead, she was sentenced to spend a night in the same cold, dark forest on her own with no food, water, mobile phone or flashlight. Judge Cicconetti wanted the 26-year-old woman to feel the same pain and suffering as the animals she had abandoned.



A group of high school students had to organize a picnic for some primary school children because they let down tyres on school buses and the children couldn't go on a school trip that day.

Judge Mike Cicconetti became famous for his unique brand of 'creative justice' and it seems to be working. He wants the punishment to fit the crime. Creative sentencing provides punishment, rehabilitation, and a unique learning experience that a defendant will remember. He wants to give people a positive lesson, not a negative one. When the crime is small or the offence is not violent in nature, prison can be more of a risk for offenders. In prison, offenders get smarter criminally and the offences become greater. Besides, US prisons are overcrowded. He usually uses these creative sentences for younger people and first-time offenders. He gets a lot of thank-you letters from both victims and criminals and most of the offenders change their way of life and never commit another offence.

**A Answer the questions.**

- 1 What inspired Judge Cicconetti's way of creative punishments?
- 2 Why does he think they are better than jail sentences?
- 3 How did he punish the girl who didn't pay the taxi driver?
- 4 What choice did he give her?
- 5 What alternative punishment did the judge offer to people who were caught speeding near schools?

**B Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

- Creative punishments are good for young people who commit their first crime.
- Creative punishments change the offenders' lives for the better.
- Creative sentencing is possible for more serious crimes.
- Creative punishments are cruel and embarrassing.
- Creative or alternative punishments are a way for people to avoid prison.
- Such punishments are effective. Very few people commit crimes again.
- Prison sentences lead to offenders repeating their crimes.
- Judge Cicconetti's sentences are meant to teach a lesson, to make the people who commit these offences think about what they have done.

**C Decide on creative punishments for these crimes or offences:**

- 1 a group of teenagers who paint graffiti all over the walls of your school
- 2 a young shoplifter who is caught stealing from a shop
- 3 a 13-year-old who is caught drinking and smoking
- 4 a woman who neglects her dogs by letting them live in an extremely dirty place
- 5 noisy neighbours who play loud music late at night