



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Northern Panhandle drug court reaches milestone **For immediate release Wednesday, March 23, 2011**

WELLSBURG, W.Va. – Ten adults will graduate from the First Judicial Circuit Northern Panhandle Treatment Courts during a ceremony at 1 p.m. on Thursday, March 24, bringing to over 100 the number of people who have successfully completed the drug court program since it began in 2005.

Supreme Court Justice Brent D. Benjamin will be the keynote speaker at the ceremony at the Brooke County Board of Education Office.

First Circuit Judge Martin J. Gaughan, First Circuit Chief Probation Officer James Lee, and Supreme Court Director of Mental Hygiene and Treatment Court Services Linda Richmond-Artimez established West Virginia's first – and still only – mental health court in 2003. The program was expanded to include the state's first adult drug/DUI court in 2005 and recently expanded again to include West Virginia's first Re-Entry Court, for people leaving prison.

There have been more than 200 graduates from both the mental health and drug/DUI courts.

"The positive change in the lives of these graduates and their families is beyond measure. What is measurable is a sixty-five percent success ratio among the first three years of our program measured by recidivism of the graduates," said Drug Court Coordinator Jim Stock. "This means that sixty-five percent our drug/DUI court participants have not been re-arrested. This equates to an enormous cost savings to the counties of Hancock, Brooke and Ohio. Coupling the lives saved, lives changed and the cost savings to our communities, our evidence-based treatment courts are a colossal success!"

West Virginia has eleven adult drug courts serving 29 counties.

Adult Treatment Courts integrate alcohol and other drug treatment services and/or mental health treatment services with criminal justice system case processing. The goal is to reduce recidivism, reduce substance abuse, reduce costs of incarceration, and enhance community safety and quality of life for citizens. Treatment teams consist of judges, magistrates, prosecutors, defense counsel, treatment providers, day report center employees, law enforcement personnel, probation officers, court staff, and others.

Through a non-adversarial team approach, criminal offenders who abuse or are addicted to substances are offered a minimum one-year program of treatment, education, community service, and other services as an alternative to traditional criminal processing.