



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Treatment Court Graduation Ceremony Focuses on Hope

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Photos available on SmugMug at <https://wvcourts.smugmug.com/>

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Treatment courts save lives and families, participants said during a multi-county Adult Drug Court graduation in the Supreme Court Courtroom on Thursday.

“I remember when I was filling out the application for drug court, there was a question ‘Why do you need it?’ I knew I was missing something in my life, but I didn’t know what that was,” said Brooklyn Cottrell of Roane County. “I wasn’t loving myself. I wasn’t getting clean for me. I wasn’t giving myself credit. Today I love myself. On the ninth of this month I will be 17 months clean. I hold my head high. I have accepted my past and let go of my guilt. I am a mother to my son, who is my motivation, who loved me when I didn’t love myself. I have a bond with my sisters. My husband never left my side. My parents have their daughter back.”

Ms. Cottrell was one of 16 people who graduated from an Adult Drug Court during the event, which kicked off Treatment Court Day at the Legislature. In addition to the graduation ceremony, there were informational tables outside the House and Senate Chambers which were staffed by treatment court graduates. The House of Delegates issued a citation and the state Senate issued a proclamation.

The graduates who chose to be honored at the Supreme Court rather than in separate ceremonies in their counties were from Boone, Hampshire, Kanawha, Lincoln, McDowell, Roane, and Wayne Counties. Raleigh County graduate Ronald K. Blankenship III, was the first Military Service Members Court participant to graduate since the Legislature re-established the special track of Adult Drug Courts in 2019.

“I have to thank everybody in the Raleigh County Veterans Court, probation office, day report center, VA Center. They have been so understanding, patient and treated me with such respect in a time in my life I felt like I deserved none,” said Blankenship, who served in the Air National Guard 2008 to 2018.

James Parker, a May 2000 graduate of the South Branch Valley Drug Court, was the keynote speaker. “No words can express how honored I am to be standing here with you,” he said. “I had a substance use disorder for 22 years. I wanted to stop for a very long time, but I just didn’t know how to do it.”

He and his wife both went through drug court, and their third daughter was born when they were in the program. “I am very thankful she will never have to witness or see her parents under the influence of any substance,” he said.

When he entered drug court he was a high school dropout. Now he has a bachelor’s degree and is working on a master’s degree in social work. “Now I’m a

contract case manager for the same drug court that saved my life. . . . Because of drug court, my entire life has been saved,” Parker said.

Wesley Haggarty of Hardy County said he has spent most of his adult life in prison. “I’ve been in so many programs. I knew what to say and how to act, but I would never applied myself. This was different,” he said. He now has shared custody of his children, a job, and is in trade school.

Lincoln County resident Amanda Triplett said her treatment court team taught her to stop blaming others for her problems. “I want to thank everyone for fighting with me and not against me. . . . They wanted me to work on myself. The problem was me. I had a lot of work to do.”

Others who graduated were: Wilson Broomfield of McDowell County (although he was unable to attend due to illness); Travis Adkins, Steven Jarrell, Joseph Reed, Shane Auber and Brooke Settle of the Kanawha County Adult Drug Court; Tiffani Corbin and Jason Rodriguez of the South Branch Valley Adult Drug Court; Candice Rice and Dusti Mullins of the Wayne County Adult Drug Court; and Steven Moore and Denise Stollings of the Boone County Adult Drug Court.

Justices Beth Walker, Evan Jenkins and John Hutchison attended the graduation, and the graduates and circuit judges who handed out the graduation certificates praised the Supreme Court for its support of treatment courts. Circuit Judges who had graduates from their treatment courts were: Fifth Judicial Circuit (Calhoun, Jackson, Mason and Roane Counties) Judge Anita Ashley; Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Jennifer Bailey; Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Hardy, Hampshire and Pendleton Counties) Judge H. Charles Carl, III; Senior Status Judge Darrell Pratt; and Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit (Boone and Lincoln Counties) Judge William Thompson. Other judges who attended were Fourth Judicial Circuit (Wirt and Wood Counties) Judge Jason Wharton, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Joanna I. Tabit, and Third Family Court Circuit (Pleasants and Wood Counties) Judge C. Darren Tallman.

The event was emceed by Probation Services Director Stephanie Bond and Nick Leftwich, the Supreme Court’s Treatment Court Coordinator.

The first Adult Drug Court was established in the Northern Panhandle in 2005; now there are 29 Adult Drug Courts serving all counties. The first Juvenile Drug Court was established in 1999 in Cabell County; now there are 18 Juvenile Drug Courts serving 24 counties.

Family Treatment Courts were authorized by the Legislature last year and pilot projects are established in Boone, Nicholas, Ohio, Randolph and Roane Counties. There currently are 30 participants in Family Treatment Courts in cases involving 53 children.

There are have been more than 2,500 treatment court graduates in West Virginia. Another 716 West Virginia adults and youths currently participate in the programs.

For more information about West Virginia Treatment Courts see:

<http://www.courtswv.gov/lower-courts/treatment-courts.html>

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