



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court Celebrates 100th and 101st Graduates Tomorrow

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WINFIELD, W.Va. – The Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court will hold a graduation ceremony for the 100th and 101st teens to complete the program at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, in the Judicial Building in Winfield.

The event is open to the media as long as media agree not to use names or identifiable photos of juvenile drug court participants.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Hutchison will attend the event in the third-floor courtroom of Twenty-Ninth Judicial Circuit (Putnam County Judge) Phillip M. Stowers.

“I want to congratulate the Putnam County program for reaching this important milestone,” said Chief Justice Hutchison.

“Juvenile drug courts make a huge difference in the lives of the participants, their families and their communities,” said Chief Justice Hutchison. “Juvenile drug court participants come to court with their families, and their families are as much a part of the process as the other treatment team members. Stopping a teen’s drug use and related criminal activity before they become entrenched behaviors improves the odds that a teen will become a productive member of society.”

“Presiding over a Juvenile Drug Court is the most rewarding work I do as a circuit judge,” said Judge Stowers. “Juvenile drug courts decrease drug abuse among children and families; they increase the high school graduation rate; they increase the chance of a juvenile being successful long-term at life; and, most importantly, they decrease the chance of a juvenile being returned to court for a criminal charge after graduation.”

The Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court began operating in February 2011. Since then, 207 teens have participated, including 21 who are in the program now. Of the 207, 57 withdrew or did not finish the voluntary program, which is more than a 50 percent completion rate.

Only two youths have committed a crime within two years of graduation.

It costs about \$5,500 per participant to run the drug court, Judge Stowers said. That compares to \$100,000 to place a juvenile in a Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) placement or shelter for six to nine months.

“These kids stay home and get drug rehabilitation and counseling in the community,” Judge Stowers said.

“It is the community volunteers and local churches that have sustained the Putnam County Juvenile Drug Court. This local support, combined with the resources of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, the DHHR, the Bureau for Juvenile Services, Pretera Center and the National Youth Advocacy Program (NYAP) has allowed us to reach the goal of 100 graduates,” Judge Stowers said.

“Reaching this milestone of 100 graduates was difficult to fathom more than a decade ago. The drug abuse crisis, overlaid with family drug use and poverty, fight us in every case. This drug court treatment team has never given up despite these obstacles. It is because of this treatment team that this program has been a success,” Judge Stowers said.

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