



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

FEBRUARY 2017

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ACCOUNTABILITY COURT ANNIVERSARY

On November 18, Hall County Drug Court celebrated its 15th anniversary and Dawson County Drug Court celebrated its 10th anniversary with a joint graduation event at First Baptist Church in Gainesville. Following remarks by founding Judge John Girardeau and Governor Nathan Deal, presiding Judge Jason Deal presented the 13 graduates who completed the intensive substance abuse treatment programs. Drug Court consists of five phases and lasts a minimum of 24 months. It encompasses vocational, educational, and spiritual components in conjunction with providing substance abuse treatment. Participants are required to attend group counseling sessions, submit to drug screens, and attend court once per month. According to Judge Deal, *“In Drug Court, I have the opportunity to see miracles happen every week. Families are reunited, the sick are healed, tax burdens become tax payers, and the results of faith, grit, and determination are revealed.”*



Judge Jason Deal addresses those in attendance at the joint graduation celebration.



Governor Nathan Deal congratulates the graduates of the Hall County Drug Court and Dawson County Drug Court programs.

APPALACHIAN CHRISTMAS PARTIES



Each year the Appalachian Judicial Circuit hosts a Christmas Party for their adult programs - criminal drug, family treatment, HELP (mental health), veterans' treatment, and the DRC Lite. The annual event has become so large in attendance, that this year, it was split between two nights. Each night was hosted at the First Baptist Church in Ellijay, which is the only place that can hold 500 attendees each night.

Participants from the courts were encouraged to attend with their families. For some, it was the first time they had spent any time with their child recently due to case plans. Through donations, the event was able to have an arts and crafts table and provide each child with a huge bag of toys from Santa. The CASA Director brought tons of teddy bears as well.

Each night, a member of the church mission's team helped served dinner. Many members of the courts attended such as judges, DFCS, accountability court workers, etc.

Santa was played by the Chief Compliance Officer, Mr. Larry Clemmons and Mrs. Clause was played by the treatment provider, Lynn Bishop. Mr. Clemmons is known to the participants as having a 'tough guy' persona and each Christmas, it just melts away when he plays Santa. Last year one child cried and begged him to make her mommy stop doing drugs for Christmas. This year he asked one of the children what they wanted for Christmas. The child said, "I already have it Santa. You have given me my mommy and daddy back." The tough old man started tearing up and had to wipe away the tears.



Congratulations on the January Graduations!

South Enotah Drug Court
Cherokee County DUI/Drug Court
Athens- Clarke County Veterans Treatment Court
Hall County HELP Court

Cobb County Mental Health Court
Hall County State Veterans Court
Savannah-Chatham Drug Court

JUDGES CORNER: JUDGE JACKSON E. COX

Burke County DUI/Drug Court

WHAT WAS YOUR INITIAL INTEREST IN BEING AN ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGE?

During my years as Solicitor-General, I encountered numerous addicted defendants who were repeat offenders, and it was not always a drug crime. Often when my office investigated a theft or a domestic violence case, we would see that the root of the problem was drugs or alcohol. Fortunately, a few years after I started prosecuting, Judge Jerry Daniel started the first accountability program for a part-time state court. The benefits for the participants were immediately visible and have continued to this day.

Program began in 2006.

**Judge Cox began
presiding over Court in
February 2015.**

Participants: 42

WAS THERE A SPECIFIC MOMENT/EVENT THAT HAPPENED THAT LET YOU KNOW YOU WERE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT FOR YOUR PROGRAM?

I think it hits you that the effort is worth it when you receive that first letter from a participant or family member. You are communicating with a new person, with a new demeanor and outlook on life. They come to realize their prior path of destruction and self-deception. When they thank you for being tough on them and giving them what they need, and not what they want, then you know they have reached an important level of understanding.

TO DATE, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS YOUR COURT'S BIGGEST PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENT?

That is a tough question to answer. There are so many individual stories of lives being dramatically changed. I think I am most proud that we have caring professionals on the drug court team who take the time to listen carefully to participants and to look into their history and family circumstances. You have to be willing to invest the time in order to build trust and arrive at the best treatment option. One other aspect of our program I am very proud of is our jobs initiative. This initiative assists those who are unemployed to become employable so that they can obtain a job. A retired AT&T executive runs our program. He has an abundance of contacts in the local economy and we love it when we can announce in accountability court sessions a new job for someone!

DOES YOUR PROGRAM HAVE ANY SORT OF SPECIAL INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY?

Community service is a big part of our program. Many participants pick up debris on Saturday mornings. This is a way they can fulfill their obligations, while giving back to the community at the same time. People here really notice their contributions and ask for them to come back soon and do it again. Other participants volunteer with community organizations and build mentoring relationship through their involvement and those relationships can last a lifetime. We also partner with local educational groups for skills training and degree completion.

SPECIAL EVENTS YOUR PARTICIPANTS TAKE PART IN?

We encourage all of our participants to impact others in the same way they have been impacted. Some have visited prisons with our treatment coordinator; others have spoken at graduation to our group or spoken to other groups. We also have a Christmas party in the courthouse for the participants and their families and the court staff.