



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2019

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ACCOUNTABILITY COURT NEWS & SPECIAL EVENTS

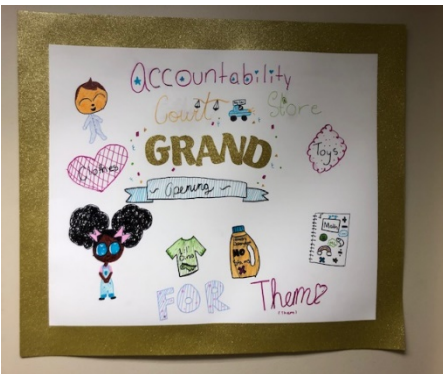


TROUP COUNTY FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

Written by the Honorable R. Michael Key, Troup County Family Treatment Court Judge

The old saying “close but no cigar” no longer rings true at the Troup County Family Treatment Court (FTC) now that parents receive tangible rewards for doing a lot of things right even when they do not do everything right. Parents take great pride in being a “star”, a designation for any parent who gives a clean, non-diluted drug screen when tested and timely attends all treatment and self-help meetings between court reviews. The designation also brings with it a tangible acknowledgement, such as a gift certificate or a candy bar, and the right to leave court early. An additional benefit is that the more times a parent is a star, the more likely it is that the parent will successfully and timely move through the program. Parents are expected to accomplish a lot in FTC and judges and other FTC team members are trained and encouraged to brag on the parents and to make a big deal out of the fact that they accomplished so much even if they fall a little bit short of star status. Most of the parents in FTC struggle financially while trying to meet all of the requirements of the program. It is hard for parents to stay motivated when they have difficulty meeting even the most basic needs for themselves and their families. In response to that, the FTC team wanted to develop a tangible acknowledgement of good, but not perfect, work to find a way to ease the financial strain on the parents and their families.

The idea of a store was already percolating when team members from FTC visited Callaway Middle School to observe their PBIS program. PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and is based on setting standards for good behavior and high character and acknowledging individual acts consistent with those principles. The implementation of PBIS has improved school climate and academic outcomes in schools all around the state. During our visit, the students gave an inspiring presentation which drove our decision to replicate a similar model in FTC.



The Accountability Store officially opened for business on November 6, during FTC staffing and was well received. Denise Smith, the FTC Coordinator, and our two Court Ambassadors from the faith community staffed it. When asked about the store in court afterwards, there was a lot of excitement about it among the parents. Some of the parents brought their children with them to shop, just like going to a regular retail store. The original plan was to try it out for two to three months, but it went so well a unanimous decision was made to keep it going. The store is appropriately named the Accountability Store to emphasize that there is value in accountability, both in terms of recovery and financial considerations.





At each court hearing, parents have an opportunity to receive \$2.00 in Accountability Bucks if, since the last court date, they delivered all clean, non-diluted screens, \$2.00 in Accountability Bucks if they made all of their individual and group sessions, and \$1.00 in Accountability Bucks if they attended all of their self-help meetings. With star status being the ultimate goal, if parents do all of that they will earn \$3.00 additional Accountability Bucks and still get a gift certificate, a candy bar or other tangible acknowledgment as they have done before. The store is stocked with donations of clothing, household items, toys, books, and other basic needs for parents and children.

Available funds were used to purchase household and personal staples that were selected based on input from the parents as part of engaging them in the project. All of the items are priced reasonably so parents can get good value for their good work.



It is amazing how much inspiration can come from approximately 180 square feet of what was once an old storage room in the basement of the Courthouse when filled with the right products and sprinkled with a heavy dose of care and compassion. As we learned from the children at Callaway Middle School, change begins first with the adults (teachers, administrators, etc.) and then with the children. The store has already touched and changed the adults working in FTC and will certainly make a positive long-term difference in the lives of the FTC parents and their families as they travel their road to recovery.

For more information about the Accountability Store, contact Judge R. Michael Key at (706) 302-3478, Denise Smith at (706) 883-2165, or Michelle Bowman at (706) 883-1735, Extension 1.

COBB COUNTY DUI COURT

Submitted by Darcy Kamau, Cobb County DUI Court Coordinator



In August 2019, the Cobb County DUI Court Program brought our treatment services “in-house” by opening our own treatment facility! In September, the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce assisted with a formal ribbon cutting at the new location. We are thrilled to embark on this new chapter in our program’s history. Opening our own facility has allowed us to have gender-specific activities such as baby showers and birthday parties, start a new therapeutic alumni group once a month, and open our testing window by co-locating our urine collection services with Averhealth. We are using contracted clinicians to provide therapy services, and they love the independence of designing groups and the creative space we have given them. Real estate is a rare commodity near the Cobb County judicial complex, but we were able to find a building that is just over a half of a mile walking distance from the

Courthouse. We have big plans for the space and are excited about new opportunities on how to better meet the needs of our program participants by having the freedom and flexibility that comes with in-house services. In just a few short months, it’s already become our second home.

Pictured are Steve Ellis (Sober Streets Inc. President), Ann Keller (Cobb County DUI Court Community Advisory Board President), Sharon Mason, (Cobb County Chamber of Commerce), Honorable Eric Brewton (Cobb County DUI Court Judge), Darcy Kamau (Cobb County DUI Court Coordinator) and Tiffany Jones (Assistant DUI Court Coordinator)

FULTON COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

Submitted by John Collins, Fulton County Accountability Courts Director

On November 2, Fulton County Accountability Courts took part in the Shatterproof 5k. Shatterproof is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in America. The 5k run was an excellent chance for the participants, staff, and county supporters to join the recovery community in raising awareness. For the third year running, the accountability court team was the largest team represented at the event. Quite a feat, considering the chilly temperatures!

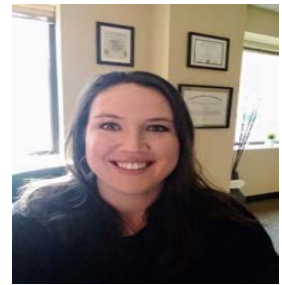


NORTHEASTERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Featured on the Access WDUN website and submitted by Julie Puckett, Enotah Mental Health Court Coordinator

A Northeastern Judicial Circuit employee has been recognized for her dedication to the job.

Heather Herrington, Assistant Director of Treatment Services, was honored with an Outstanding Achievement award by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. Herrington was recognized for her commitment to her profession, her dedication to clinical excellence, and the positive impact she has on the lives of participants in the program.



NEJC's Director of Treatment Services, Jessi Emmett said, "I am so happy to see (Heather) recognized for her hard work; she exemplifies the standards of our profession and is an influential mentor. She dedicates herself to helping those struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues and is a wonderful example to other counselors."

With an extensive background in both professional and addiction counseling, Herrington has served the NEJC since 2006 in various roles, most recently taking the position of Assistant Director in 2019.

When asked about being recognized Herrington said, "it was really an unexpected honor."

Herrington said she takes her role as a provider very seriously and that it is important to her that the clients participating in the program be receiving the highest quality of service from its clinicians.

DEKALB COUNTY FELONY MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Submitted by DeShona A. Charles, DeKalb County Felony Mental Health Court Coordinator



The DeKalb County Felony Mental Health Court hosted a "Friendsgiving" on November 15th, 2019.

Both program participants and staff members are pictured enjoying a delicious meal, upbeat music, prizes, and wellness dialogue. The goal of "Friendsgiving" was to illustrate the importance of giving and accepting support in the journey to wellness. Participants were also able to reinforce the idea that there are so many ways to have fun in RECOVERY.

When giving feedback about the event, one participant shared, "I felt like I was at a table with my family."

ACCOUNTABILITY COURT GRADUATIONS

RICHMOND COUNTY DUI & VETERANS COURT

Submitted by Crystal Page, Richmond County DUI & Veterans Court Coordinator

Richmond County DUI and Veterans Court had its graduation on Friday, November 22 with 16 individuals who graduated from DUI Court and three who graduated from Veterans Court. Our speaker was a young woman, 30 years of age and a single mother of 11-month-old twin girls. She has been to 14 rehab facilities and was a heroin user at a young age. She used prostitution to support herself and lived mostly in hotels. She was using heroin up until her fourth month of pregnancy. She finally begged one of our SAMHSA partners, Hope House of Augusta, to give her one more try in treatment and also to be placed on medication-assisted treatment. She has been clean for 16 months, completed the Hope House treatment program, and is now employed at Hope House. She has reconnected with her mother and family. The graduates gave her a standing ovation, and it was a moving experience for all who attended.

We were also able to connect three families with another one of our community partners, Augusta Urban Ministries, who will provide Christmas gifts to their children.

For the past three years, our court has had a radio program called "First Step" hosted by our accountability court Judge David D. Watkins. We have received very positive feedback on how the program has helped them understand addiction while also providing advice to family and friends who are also affected by the disease of addiction. The program airs every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. on WGAC in Augusta. It can also be viewed live on Facebook.

CHATHAM COUNTY FAMILY TREATMENT COURT

Submitted by Latrell Gulotta, Chatham County Family Treatment Court Coordinator

With a Celebrating Families graduation on November 12 and a Family Treatment Court graduation on November 19, the Chatham County Family Treatment Court celebrated the accomplishments of 12 parents and children.



GRADY COUNTY DRUG COURT

*Submitted by Mary Brown, South Georgia Judicial Circuit
Accountability Court Coordinator*



The South Georgia Judicial Circuit and Accountability Court held the fourth Drug Court graduation ceremony on Thursday, November 14. The graduation ceremony was held at the Grady County Courthouse main courtroom. Six graduates were recognized during this ceremony. Keynote speakers were Pastor Johnny Moore and Chris Maples, a past graduate. Maples addressed the graduates with encouraging words that they, too, can continue to make it if they have made it this far. He shared with them that his success with sobriety is due to his relationship with Jesus. Pastor Moore of Cairo's Family Worship Center shared his past drug addictions and his three conclusions for becoming and staying sober. He said that you need God, the right people in your life, and a church. He told all the graduates that God has a plan for their lives. A lunch immediately following the ceremony was held at the Grady County Agriculture Center.

Upcoming accountability court graduation announcements are located on the CACJ website calendar.



To include a court program in the CACJ newsletter or to share an idea for a future submission, please send ideas to Kimberly.Howard@georgiacourts.org.

November Graduation Ceremonies

Congratulations, Graduates!

Muscogee Circuit Mental
Health Court

Appalachian Judicial Circuit
Accountability Courts

Cobb County Family
Treatment Court

Troup County DUI/Drug
Court

Cobb County DUI Court

Hall County DUI Court

Hall County Drug Court

DeKalb County Veterans
Treatment Court

Richmond County DUI &
Veterans Court

Chatham County Family
Treatment Court

Grady County Drug Court

Council of Accountability Court Judges News

CERTIFICATION UPDATE

Please be aware that certification season begins on Monday, December 2, 2019. This year, the majority of adult felony drug courts, adult mental health courts, and veteran treatment courts will need to recertify. If you are unsure of your certification status, please refer to your program's certification letter or contact Josh Becker at josh.becker@georgiacourts.gov.

As in previous years, certification applications and instructions are located on the CACJ website, under the Standards and Certification tab. You may notice a change to the certification applications this year. If you have a hybrid program or a program with multiple tracks (e.g. a drug court with a mental health court track) you will need to answer supplemental questions on your certification application. For most of you, this will be much easier than completing two or more separate applications. If you do not have a hybrid program, then you do not need to answer the supplemental questions – you can simply leave them blank. Please reach out to CACJ's certification team if you have questions about how to complete the certification application.

Certification applications are due by close of business on **January 17, 2020**. As always, the sooner you complete and submit your application, the sooner we can review and give you constructive feedback. Please reach out with any questions or concerns.

STAFF UPDATE

In November CACJ staff welcomed a seasoned accountability court professional to our team – Ms. Debbie Mott!

Debbie previously served as the Director of Treatment Services in the Northeastern Judicial Circuit. This was a position that she held for 12 of the 15 years she worked for Hall and Dawson Counties' accountability courts. She is contracted with CACJ to help execute various grant and training related projects. She comes to the table with a wealth of accountability court knowledge. We are excited to work with Debbie again and look forward to utilizing her skills and abilities as a resource for Georgia's accountability courts. Please join CACJ in welcoming Ms. Debbie Mott!

Her email address is coming soon. Once it is established in the coming days, it will be Debbie.Mott@georgiacourts.gov.