



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

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WWW.GAACCOUNTABILITYCOURTS.ORG

FROM THE OFFICE OF BARACK OBAMA

It's not every day your drug court gets a letter from the former President! In April, the Henry County Drug Court received a congratulations letter on their recent graduation.

"Your efforts over the last two years are a testament..., and your completion of this program speaks to America's legacy as a nation of second chances." – President Barack Obama to the Graduates

TIFT JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

On May 10, 2017 in partnership with the Tift Regional Medical Center System, the Tifton Judicial Circuit Accountability Courts hosted an Addiction and Substance Abuse Community Forum in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. At the forum professionals across varying disciplines gave their perspectives on the drug epidemic in Tift County and South Georgia. The Honorable Judge Melanie Cross (Tifton Judicial Circuit Adult Felony Drug Court Judge), the Honorable Judge Herbert Benson (Tifton Judicial Circuit Tift County DUI Court Judge), and the Distinguished Dr. Abhinav Saxena (Tift Regional Medical Center Psychiatrist and Emergency Room Physician) lead the panel of professionals in law enforcement, behavioral health, and family/children welfare in discussing topics and fielding questions relating to addiction, the role of the Drug Court programs, and community solutions to combat the substance abuse/addiction epidemic. Current Adult Felony Drug Court participant Marcus Bennett participated in the panel, giving the audience personal insight to the struggles of addiction and the value the Adult Felony Drug Court has added to his life. Given the resounding success of this event, the Tifton Judicial Circuit Accountability Courts will be hosting an Addiction and Substance Abuse Community Forum Part 2 tentatively on June 20, 2017.



(L to R) Marcus Bennett, Judge Herbert Benson, Judge Bill Reinhardt, Dr. Abhinav Saxena, and Judge Melodie Cross

GWINNETT COUNTY SUMMIT

On May 25th, Gwinnett County hosted a Summit on Mental Health and Substance Abuse for the community. Judge Kathy Schrader organized the summit to bring together the county's stakeholders; US Attorney's Office, the DA's Office, providers, non – profits and even former addicts.

"This is an epidemic that knows no boundaries. And if we don't work together we're not going to win," Judge Schrader

To view more: www.fox5atlanta.com/news/257059793-story and www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYdo7QchSbo&sns=em

CLAYTON COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

As pictured in the CACJ June Newsletter, the Clayton County Drug and DUI courts hosted a picnic for National Drug Court Month. During the event they were able to hold an abbreviated court session as well as recognize a participant who obtained a GED. Two participants read their phase up request, and one participant received a phase up certificate. Judge Collier and Judge Mason, along with the entire drug court team, and former graduates were in attendance. Participants played games such as Corn Hole and football toss. State Representative Valencia Seay, and representatives from Surge Staffing, and Truck Secure Parking also attended the event.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE JUNE GRADUATIONS! Blue Ridge Drug Court, Colquitt Circuit SA/MH Court, Fulton County Juvenile Mental Health Court, Hall County Family Treatment Court, Muscogee County Adult Drug Court, and Savannah – Chatham County Drug Court

FELONY DRUG COURTS

Lasheika Kassa

When I first embarked on my journey with CACJ I was tasked with peer reviewing the adult felony drug courts along with several other duties. To date, peer reviews have been a huge success since the formation of the Council of Accountability Court Judges. Currently our dedicated peer review teams, which are trained to assist the certification officers have completed thirty seven adult felony drug courts with four of them already being up for another peer review. These four drug courts were reviewed in 2013 with two being pilot sites to the peer review process. These dedicated peer review teams have helped me accomplish 90% of all of Georgia's Adult Felony Drug Courts with an eleven remaining courts to complete. The progress has been substantial and helpful to the Council as well as to the courts. This process allows CACJ to see what trainings and assistance can be offered yearly to our courts and what the Council can do to strive to make Georgia courts number one. I would like to say Thanks to the judges, coordinators and peer review teams for being understanding of this process and I look forward to working with each and every one of our accountability courts in Georgia. You can learn more about peer reviews on our website www.gaaccountabilitycourts.org/peer-review.

MENTAL HEALTH COURTS

Sacha Greene

Peer review's for Georgia's mental health court's has been enlightening, amusing, and interesting; to say the least. Mental health court participants are a little bit different from participants in other accountability court programs, so they require a little bit more nurturing. Therefore, it is amazing to see and hear about their progress and journey throughout the program. Once they are able to balance life and stabilize their medications, they are able to see a light at the end of the tunnel and a better life for them and their families. All of the teams that work with this population are compassionate and work together for the good of the program to assist the participants with living a clean and sober life; especially AFTER graduation. It has also been tons of fun working with each and every peer review team. Each team provides a different prospective, positive feedback, and enjoy learning from other programs. I too have enjoyed learning about how to interact with people who have mental health disorders which can benefit me on a daily basis and able to educate others on the disease and how to interact with them.

Family Treatment Courts and DUI Courts will have the opportunity to participate in the Peer Review process toward the end of 2017.

CONASAUGA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT DRUG COURT

In April, the Conasauga Drug Court held their bi-annual talent show. The event allows the participants to be pulled out of their comfort zone, as it is the same with recovery, stated Drug Court Judge Jim Wilbanks. He hopes the talent show gives participants a way to show others, and themselves, that they are still valuable members of society. To the full and awe – inspiring article; visit the CACJ website: www.gaaccountabilitycourts.org/apps/blog/



Pataula Judicial Circuit Drug Court had the pleasure of being invited to visit the 17th District Treatment Court in Lewisburg, PA.



Dana Glass (TP for Pataula), Judge Michael Sholley (17th District, PA), Judge Joe Bishop (Pataula DC Judge), Beau Leyse (Pataula DC Coordinator)

CONGRATULATIONS!

NEW ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

- Bartow County Family Treatment Court
Carroll County Family Treatment Court
Chatham County Juvenile Mental Health Court
Cherokee County Veterans Treatment Court
Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit Drug Court
Muscookee County Family Treatment Court
Newton County Family Treatment Court
Rome Judicial Circuit Drug Court
Troup County Family Treatment Court

"They've been empowered. They are strong enough now to keep walking and not respond to that person who was a negative influence in their life. They can just wave them off and keep walking." - Judge Jim Wilbanks