



Council of Accountability Court Judges of Georgia

The Muscogee County Adult and Juvenile Drug Courts: *Celebrate National Drug Court Month*

Dayna Solomon

National Drug Court Month is coordinated by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP). This year, treatment courts throughout the nation are celebrating National Drug Court Month with the theme “**Criminal Justice Reform in Action.**” Today, 2,966 treatment courts are in operation in all 50 states, plus US territories, successfully treating close to 150,000 substance-addicted individuals each year. Since 1989, these courts have saved over 1.4 million lives and billions of tax dollars. “Drug courts and other treatment courts are the most successful programs for seriously addicted individuals in our nation’s history and represent true criminal justice reform in action,” said NADCP CEO Carson Fox. “Drug courts and other treatment courts restore lives, reunite families, and make communities safer, all while saving money for taxpayers. Instead of punishment, these programs provide life-saving treatment to those who need it most.”

Both the Adult and Juvenile Drug Courts are comprised of judicially supervised court dockets that reduce correctional costs, enhance community safety, and improve public welfare. In these programs, seriously addicted individuals remain in treatment for long periods of time while under close supervision. Court participants must meet obligations to themselves, their families, and society. To ensure accountability, they are regularly and randomly tested for substance use, required to appear frequently in court for the judge to review their progress, rewarded for meeting goals, and sanctioned for not meeting clearly stated obligations. Research continues to show that treatment courts work better than jail or prison, better than probation, and better than treatment alone.

Treatment courts are this nation’s most effective strategy to reduce recidivism among substance addicted, nonviolent offenders with criminal histories. Nationally, 75% of individuals who complete such programs are not re-arrested. These courts save up to \$13,000 for every individual they serve and return as much as \$27 for every \$1 invested.



Judge Jordan and drug court staff Dayna Solomon and Ingrid Edwards with his Founders Award.



Judge Kennon speaking on his Juvenile Drug Court.

Locally, the Adult Drug Court, which began in 2007 with Judge Frank Jordan Jr., has successfully graduated a total of 133 participants and seen a total of 9 drug free babies born while the mother was an active participant in the program. Of the 226 participants we have served (or are currently serving), only 28% were employed at the time of entry, however, 70% were gainfully employed at the time of graduation. According to the most recent program evaluation completed by Dr. Andrew Cox, there is also a 78% reduction in recidivism rates among those who graduate successfully from the program. This program saves tax payer monies while creating a safer community. The Adult Drug Court is funded by the Council of Accountability Courts Judges, The City of Columbus (JAG and DATE funds) and through the Mayor’s Office of Crime Prevention.

Additionally, the Muscogee County Juvenile Drug Court, which accepted its first participant January 16, 2000 under the administration of Judge Warner L. Kennon, has since served over 741 adolescents and their families. Of these, 368 participants have successfully completed the program. The Juvenile Drug Court’s Program Evaluator, Dr. Robert Carlson, has evaluated the program and determined that the average length of participation is approximately 18 months and there are currently 30 active participants.

Muscogee County Continued ...

The Juvenile Drug Court has a sustained recidivism rate of 17%. Furthermore, at admission, 45% of participants were either not attending school (9%) or enrolled in Alternative school (36%). At Graduation, 76% were in school and attending regular classes. Like the Adult Drug Court, this program provides the citizens a major cost savings and is also funded by the Council of Accountability Courts Judges, The City of Columbus (JAG and DATE funds), the Mayor's Office of Crime Prevention, and through various fundraising efforts and donations.

In celebration of National Drug Court Month, the Muscogee County Adult Drug Court in conjunction with the Muscogee County Juvenile Drug Court will hold a Celebration of Drug Courts on May 20, 2016. The upcoming celebration is evidence of the tremendous impact the each of these Courts has had on our community and will send a powerful message that these programs reduce drug use, crime, and recidivism while saving lives, families, and valuable resources for our state.



Juvenile Court Director Samantha Cannon and Muscogee County Sheriff John Darr.

Pictures included are from the Muscogee County Adult and Juvenile Drug Court Celebration. A collaborative effort joining the two drug courts to celebrate National Drug Court month. Judges Frank Jordan Jr. And Warner Kennon were both presented with Mayoral Proclamations and also were both recipients of the Founders Awards. Judge Kennon started the Juvenile Drug Court in 2000 and Judge Jordan founded the Adult Drug Court in 2007.



Judge Jordan receiving the Mayoral Proclamation

Hall County Family Treatment Court Graduation

It is always great when we can celebrate our courts as well as our participant's success. Congratulations to Hall County Family Treatment Court's most recent graduation!



RIGHT TO LEFT: JUDGE TOLLER, DESIRAY RIDER AND EDEN SMITH