



COUNCIL OF ACCOUNTABILITY COURT JUDGES OF GEORGIA

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RETURNING VETERANS TASK FORCE

The CACJ staff had the opportunity to attend a Returning Veterans Task Force (RVTF) meeting last month. The RVTF is an intra-state task force that investigates how Georgia's state government agencies can coordinate services to better assist service members transitioning from active duty back into society. It is comprised of 11 agencies, including CACJ, such as DBHDD, DOC, DOL, Secretary of State, University System of Georgia, and Georgia Secretary of State; just to name a few. Guests from outside organizations were invited to attend the meeting and share with the group a number of projects that they've developed to help veterans across the state. The Warrior Alliance presented Operation Double Eagle. Operation Double Eagle consists of a unique relationship with Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute to re-skill veterans that are enrolled on projects such as golf course maintenance, construction, operations, and vertical (building) construction while they readjust to civilian life. Their mission and goal is to provide vocational rehabilitation for wounded, ill, and injured veterans. (Visit thewarrioralliance.org for more info) A representative from the Health Resources and

Services Administration spoke about their initiative to launch their federal "Medic to Nurse" pilot program. There is currently a nursing shortage because most are preparing to retire. By 2020, there will be a need for 1 million nurses. HRSA's focus is to educate the nursing schools on how much experience the veterans have as a medic and ask them to not weigh so heavily on the GPA when considering accepting them into their nursing program. At this time, there are no nursing schools in the metro Atlanta area that consider modifying their acceptance procedures. However, the pilot program is doing well in Miami, Florida.

We are invited to attend the next quarterly meeting in October and hope to learn about more ways to assist our veterans on a daily basis. At each meeting, we share with the attendees the help that is offered to veterans in the various Veterans Treatment Courts programs and to let us know if they want to attend a graduation. With that being said, please send in your Veterans Treatment Courts graduation dates through the listserv.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT GRADUATION: COBB COUNTY

Cobb County Veterans Treatment Court held its second graduation on Friday, August 19, 2016. The ceremony began with a presentation of the colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The 31 participants in attendance, including the seven graduates, were no strangers to pledges and commitment as evidenced by their service to their country and their desire to get their lives back on track by joining the Veterans Treatment Court program.

The jury assembly room at the superior court house was packed with attendees including family members, friends, and court and county personnel. Georgia Supreme Court Justice Keith Blackwell and Court of Appeals Judge Nels Peterson were also in attendance at the ceremony. Georgia's Attorney General Samuel Olens even gave the keynote speech where he congratulated the graduates on their hard work and wished them well in their future endeavors.

The Veterans Court began in June 2014 under presiding Judge Reuben Green, himself a veteran. Since then, the program has grown quickly and garnered much community support, including the involvement of more than 30 veteran mentors who are key to the participants' success. As the participants were called up to receive their certificates and give their remarks, their mentors stayed at their sides and even spoke themselves. Words like *humility*, *journey*, *transformation*, and *opportunity* were repeated throughout the ceremony as participants and mentors described their experiences over the past two years. Gratitude was common amongst all of the participants as they thanked the Veterans Court team and their mentors for the opportunity to turn their lives around.

The ceremony closed with additional remarks by Judge Green and was followed by a small reception where the graduates celebrated the momentous occasion with the guests in attendance. During the ceremony, a retired Colonel who now acts as a mentor said, "Regardless of rank, wherever you are, we stand with you and we stand behind you." It was clear that the court team and the mentors do indeed stand behind their participants and graduates. Congratulations to Cobb Veterans Treatment Court on their second graduation!



On August 5th, the CACJ Staff hosted a Coordinator Training in Atlanta. Thanks to everyone that participated!

Your efforts and participation were greatly appreciated.



Congratulations to August Graduations!

Cobb County MH Court	5
Gwinnett County Drug Court	12
Western Veterans Treatment Court	2
Cobb Veterans Court	7
Cobb County DUI Court	11
Chatham-Savannah Drug Court	9

JUDGES CORNER: JUDGE FRANK JORDAN

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

I first learned about Accountability courts at the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada when the Reno Drug Court held a session for Judges taking the General Jurisdiction Course. I was most impressed by three graduates of the Drug Court who gave inspiring testimonials about their recovery. I came home from Reno with the desire to start a Drug Court but without knowing how to get started. In the meantime, I referred addicted Defendants to treatment through probation and private treatment providers. Milton Abrams, one of the private treatment providers, urged me to start a drug court but I resisted. A chance encounter with one of the Defendants I had referred to Mr. Abrams program, who was a waitress at a restaurant finally convinced me "I was ready" to start a drug court. Her testimonial before me and her employer, who had provided her support and encouragement, was so compelling I knew when I walked out of the restaurant, it was time. I try to set the tone for our participants at the initial induction into the program. Judge Jack Partain provided me with good advice on developing an induction protocol where I come off the bench and greet each participant. I tell each person that drug court will be the hardest thing they will have to do, that we are not interesting in putting them in jail, but will supply the tools to keep them drug and alcohol free. If a participant fails, the team feels we have failed – if a participant succeeds, we have succeeded. Let the team help you, let family help you, let others help you. Ultimately, the decision is theirs; to live each and every day drug and alcohol free.

Judge Jordan, since inception, presides over the Muscogee County Adult Felony Drug Court.

Program Begin: October 2007

Current Participants: 75

How many participants have graduated? 150

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

I do not believe there is one particular moment. Every graduation, when participants give their testimony, there is a feeling of hope, of gratitude. Watching new mothers hold drug free babies, hearing tales of struggle and hopelessness turn to future plans and education, those are the moments to hold on to. In those moments we know. We may not be able to help them all, but we are doing something right to help those we can. We are making a difference; we are an instrument of change.

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

Since the founding in October 2007, our court has served over 270 participants, graduated over 150 participants, and have had 10 babies born drug free to participants. We operate our own drug testing lab, have a team of four surveillance officers, emphasize training for all team members, and have an intern program for graduate level counseling and social work students through Troy State University and USC. We have a professional clinical evaluator who conducts clinical evaluations on each participant referred to the program and can say all decisions made about the treatment of the participants is based in solid clinical advice from licensed clinicians. I am proud of the program we are running here. Almost ten years running and we are still constantly evolving to meet the needs of those who need our help.

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

Our program has a strong professional relationship with our local CSB, New Horizons Behavioral Health. Through this relationship, we are able to offer our participants a wide range of care options and are now addressing co-occurring disorders more appropriately. We are connected to the Drugs Don't Work program through the Chamber of Commerce, National Drug Court Month, National Recovery Month and previously sat on the board of the Re-entry roundtable in Columbus, GA. Our case managers are a part of the Columbus Homeless Resource Network. We partner with multiple local medical and dental providers who provide services for our participants. We partner with local agencies for our participants who complete community service work and look for community projects to take part in.