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Morris/Sussex Vicinage to Hold Drug Court Graduation

The Sussex County Drug Court program will hold a commencement and graduation ceremony on Monday, Oct. 22, at 2 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse, 3 High St., Newton.

Four participants will commence to the fourth and final phase of the drug court program and six will graduate. Superior Court Judge N. Peter Conforti, who presides over the Sussex County Drug Court, will host the graduation. James Argyelan, founder New Foundation Recovery House, will be the keynote speaker.

The Morris County Drug Court program will hold a commencement and graduation ceremony on Thursday, Oct. 25 at 1:30 p.m. at the Lewis Morris Park Cultural Center, 300 Mendham Rd., Morris Township. Four participants will commence to the fourth and final phase of the program and 14 will graduate.

Superior Court Judge Stuart Minkowitz, who presides over the Morris County Drug Court, will host the graduation. He will be joined by Criminal Division Presiding Judge Thomas V. Manahan, who has presided over drug court. James Argyelan will give the keynote address.

The ceremonies celebrate the completion by the graduates of a rigorous program of comprehensive treatment, intensive supervision and strict accountability.

Like the other drug courts in New Jersey and around the United States, the drug courts in Morris and Sussex counties hear cases of offenders charged with drug-related crimes. Drug courts began in New Jersey in the late 1990s. By September 2004, programs were in operation in every county.

Drug courts divert participants from state prisons into community-based treatment programs. They must undergo random and frequent drug testing, intensive probation supervision, and regular court reporting.

Drug courts are a highly specialized team process that functions within the existing Superior Court structure to address nonviolent drug-related cases. They are unique in the criminal justice environment because they build a close collaborative relationship between criminal justice and drug treatment professionals. Within a cooperative courtroom atmosphere, the judge heads a team of court staff, attorneys, probation officers, substance abuse

evaluators, and treatment counselors who work in concert to support and monitor a participant's recovery. Hard-working drug court participants are publicly acknowledged and encouraged, while non-compliant participants can be subjected to sanctions, including prison time.

Morris County has more than 130 participants, and Sussex County has more than 90 participants. The program helps to restore lives, reunite families, and make communities safer.

For more information about the drug court program or the commencement ceremonies, contact Charles C. Johnson Jr., drug court coordinator, at 973-326-6997.

Reporters and photographers are invited to attend.

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