



BURLINGTON VICINAGE PRESS RELEASE

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BURLINGTON TO HOLD FIRST DRUG COURT COMMENCEMENT

MOUNT HOLLY – Burlington County Drug Court will hold its first commencement on Thursday, May 4, 2006 at 10 a.m. This program emphasizes treatment as a means to reduce recidivism within the criminal justice system. The commencement will be held at the Burlington County Historic Prison courtyard on High Street in Mount Holly. Judge Patricia Richmond LeBon, who currently oversees drug court cases in Burlington County, will preside over the event.

Judge John A. Almeida, Burlington County's first drug court judge, will give the keynote address. The ceremony will recognize both those completing the program and those moving to the next phase of treatment.

The drug court program is a highly specialized team process that functions within the superior court structure to address nonviolent drug-related cases. Participants enter the program in lieu of prison time and are involved in rigorous specialized treatment. This program blends community based treatment, rehabilitation and supervision of offenders. It encourages personal accountability, education, full time employment and involvement with self-help organizations. Drug court has been in existence in Burlington County since September 2004.

Drug courts operate in every court district in New Jersey and currently serve more than 2300 participants. Burlington County presently has 51 active participants. Since the program's inception, offenders have found employment and begun meeting their financial obligations; parents have regained custody of their children and dozens of drug free babies have been born to participants around the state. Drug courts have proven effective at breaking the cycle of drug abuse and crime, giving drug addicts the opportunity to become productive citizens.

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