

# SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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## News Release

**For Immediate Release May 22, 2006**

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Essex County Adult Drug Court Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Mayor-elect Cory Booker to Deliver Keynote Address

The Essex County Superior Court will be celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of adult drug court, along with its 15<sup>th</sup> commencement ceremony. Events will take place in room 604 of the New Courts Building, 50 West Market Street, at 1:30 p.m. on June 1, 2006. Newark Mayor-elect Cory Booker will deliver the keynote address. Families and friends will be on hand and community members are invited to join the celebration.

Essex and Camden Counties were the first counties in the state to have an adult drug court, first accepting participants in 1996. Since then, drug courts have expanded and each county in New Jersey now has an adult drug court. The goal of drug court is to reduce crime while assisting non-violent drug-addicted offenders with rehabilitation. Statewide, drug courts in New Jersey already have helped more than 5,000 people. Ninety-two percent were employed upon graduation and 52 percent had valid driver's licenses. Currently, there are more than 2,300 participants in the program.

Drug courts are a highly specialized team process with judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation, corrections officers and rehabilitation and treatment providers all working together. Participants appear regularly before a Superior Court judge and are required to undergo frequent drug testing, obtain jobs, pay their fines and support their families. They are intensely supervised by specially trained probation officers.

Drug court targets offenders who, were it not for their substance abuse, may never have been involved with the court system. Drug court programs are rigorous, requiring completion of four phases during five years of intensive drug and alcohol treatment and testing, and a tightly structured regimen of treatment and recovery services. This level of supervision permits the program to support the recovery process, but also allows supervisors to react swiftly to impose appropriate therapeutic sanctions or to reinstate criminal proceedings when participants cannot comply with the program.

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Participants who reach commencement have been in the program a minimum of 18 months and made significant progress in meeting the goals of drug court. Fourteen participants will receive certificates marking their completion of Phase III of the program, where they will remain subject to random urine testing and must continue with treatment provisions. They also will serve as positive role models for participants in Phase I and Phase II. The approach is both intensive and extensive and offers addicted offenders the best chance to remain drug free.

The Essex County drug court is presided over by Criminal Division Presiding Judge Donald J. Volkert, Jr. The program has more than 260 active participants and more than 80 graduates who have successfully completed the full 5-year program.

The commencement ceremony and celebration will include speakers from the court system and the drug court alumni group, culminating with the keynote address. A reception will follow the ceremony.

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