

SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY



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For immediate release: May 5, 2014

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Middlesex County Drug Court to Host Eighth Graduation Ceremony

The Middlesex County Drug Court will hold its eighth graduation ceremony on Friday, May 9, at 10 a.m. in the jury room of the Middlesex County Courthouse, 56 Paterson St., New Brunswick. A total of 39 participants will be awarded certificates marking their completion of the final phase of a rigorous 3- to 5-year program of comprehensive drug treatment and intensive supervision.

Assignment Judge Travis L. Francis will deliver the welcome. Superior Court Judge Lorraine Pullen, who presides over the Middlesex County Drug Court, will officiate. Judge Dennis Nieves will give remarks about the success of the program.

The drug court program is a highly specialized team process within the existing Superior Court structure that addresses nonviolent drug-related cases. Drug courts are unique in the criminal justice environment because they build a close collaborative relationship between criminal justice and drug treatment professionals.

The program has been successful in breaking the cycle of addiction to improve the lives of individuals. It provides structure, assists participants with access to appropriate treatment and encourages them to become productive members of the community.

Drug court programs are rigorous, requiring the completion of four phases during five years of intensive drug and alcohol treatment and testing. Changes in the treatment delivery system this year include the addition of a treatment component on changing criminal thinking and behaviors. Participants continue to follow a tightly structured regimen of treatment and recovery-focused 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 do not comply.

A total of 131 participants have graduated Middlesex County's drug court program since it began in September 2004. Of these graduates, nine regained custody of children, 50 received their New Jersey driver's licenses back, and 86 were eligible for medical benefits with their jobs. A total of \$345,457 in penalties, fines and fees has been collected from those graduates. In addition, 21 graduates improved their level of education or obtained vocational training.

Drug courts operate in every county in New Jersey and serve more than 4,800 people statewide. There are 311 Middlesex County Drug Court participants.

Interviews and photo opportunities with Judge Pullen and program graduates will be available.

The event is open to the press and the public. Reservations should be made by sending an email to Tammy.D'Aloia@judiciary.state.nj.us or by calling 732-565-5057.

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