

Drug Court Training Conference is Jan. 27-28 in Choctaw

January 20, 2004

Judges, court staff, law enforcement and corrections officers and treatment providers will gather in Choctaw Jan. 27 and 28 for the state's first Drug Court Training Conference. The conference will be held at the Golden Moon Hotel and Casino at the Pearl River Resort.

National leaders in drug court education and research as well as Mississippi professionals will be among the speakers. Members of the news media are welcome to attend.

C. West Huddleston III, director of the National Drug Court Institute in Alexandria, Va., will open the conference at 8 a.m. Jan. 27. Huddleston, a licensed substance abuse counselor, helped develop and implement in-custody mental health and substance abuse treatment programs for inmates of the Tennessee and Oklahoma correctional systems before he became director of the National Drug Court Institute.

Karen Freeman-Wilson, chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute, will be the keynote speaker during lunch at noon Jan. 27. She served as a Gary, Ind., city court judge 1994-2000, where she presided over that city's drug court from its inception in 1996. Freeman-Wilson is former attorney general of the state of Indiana. She is former executive director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, a former deputy prosecutor and a former public defender.

Criminal justice consultant Jane E. Pfeifer, former drug court manager for the Butte County, Calif., Drug Courts, will conduct several training sessions during the first day of the conference. Ms. Pfeifer supervised a DUI Court for Butte County. She also helped implement a juvenile drug court in Butte County in 1999.

Biomedical consultant Dr. Leo Kadehjian will talk about drug testing at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 28. Dr. Kadehjian, of Palo Alto, Calif., has experience in on-site drug testing programs. He lectures and writes about clinical, scientific, regulatory and legal issues in drug testing.

At 9:45 a.m. Jan. 28, Maj. Ronnie K. Frazier of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics will talk about the prevalence of crystal methamphetamine. Maj. Frazier, a 27-year veteran of law enforcement, has specialized in drug enforcement for 19 years.

The conference will conclude with a panel discussion to be moderated by Circuit Judge Vernon R. Cotten of Carthage, who presides over the 8th Circuit Drug Court in Leake, Neshoba, Newton and Scott counties. The panel discussion is scheduled for 11 a.m. to noon Jan. 28.

A conference schedule is posted on the Supreme Court's Internet web site. The link is <http://www.mssc.state.ms.us/AOC/default.asp>. Click on "Drug Court Training Conference."

The conference is sponsored by the Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals in conjunction with the National Drug Court Institute.

Approximately 637 offenders who have drug and alcohol abuse problems are currently participating in 13 drug courts across the state. Drug courts operate in the 2nd Circuit of Hancock, Harrison and Stone Counties; the 4th Circuit of Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties; the 6th Circuit in Adams County; the 7th Circuit of Hinds County; the 8th Circuit of Leake, Neshoba, Newton and Scott counties; the 11th Circuit in Bolivar and Coahoma counties; the 12th Circuit of Forrest and Perry counties; the 14th Circuit of Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties; the 19th Circuit of George, Greene and Jackson counties; Adams County Youth Court; DeSoto County Youth Court; Forrest County Youth Court; and Madison County Youth Court.

Four other jurisdictions have plans to start drug courts. They are the 9th Circuit Court of Issaquena, Sharkey and Warren counties; Hinds County Justice Court; Jackson Municipal Court; and Rankin County Youth Court.

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