

## National drug court leader to address 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit graduation

July 11, 2005

The head of a national drug court education, training and research organization will be the keynote speaker July 18 at the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit District Drug Court graduation in Indianola.

Karen Freeman-Wilson, chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute in Alexandria, Va., has accepted an invitation to address the graduation.

The ceremony is scheduled for 2 p.m. July 18 at the Sunflower County Courthouse, 200 Main Street, Indianola. Circuit Judge Ashley Hines will preside.

Eight people are scheduled to graduate from the Drug Court program, said Drug Court Coordinator Lisa Washington.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit Drug Court, which includes Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties, has been in operation since 2003. Forty-eight people are enrolled in the program. Eight have previously graduated from the program.

Freeman-Wilson has served as chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and executive director of the National Drug Court Institute since 2001. 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, and former director of the Indiana Office of Drug Control Policy. She is former executive director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, a former deputy prosecutor and a former public defender.

Freeman-Wilson is a leading national advocate of treating the drug addiction that is the underlying cause of so many crimes. Drug court programs combine drug treatment, frequent drug testing, close supervision and numerous meetings by participants with the judge and court staff. Those who do not comply go to jail.

Freeman-Wilson calls it "coerced treatment." In a statement on the web site of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, [www.nadcp.org](http://www.nadcp.org), she says, "Our philosophy is that coerced treatment works, that we serve society best by addressing underlying challenges faced by the criminal offender and that continuously incarcerating drug-addicted, non-violent offenders has no long term benefit for the offender or society."

More than 1,600 drug courts are in operation across the nation. Mississippi has 13 drug courts.

For more information about drug court programs in Mississippi, go to the web site of the Mississippi Supreme Court at [www.mssc.state.ms.us](http://www.mssc.state.ms.us) and click on AOC.

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