

21st Circuit Drug Court graduation is November 18 in Yazoo City

November 14, 2008

The 21st Judicial District Drug Court will celebrate its second graduation with a ceremony at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 18, in the second floor courtroom at the Yazoo County Courthouse, 209 East Broadway St., in Yazoo City.

Rep. Alyce G. Clarke of Jackson, a pioneer in the drug court movement, will be the keynote speaker. Circuit Judge Jannie Lewis will preside.

Five people are expected to graduate, said Drug court Coordinator Demetrica Johnson. They include four Yazoo County residents and one person from Humphreys County.

Forty-five people will remain enrolled in the 21st Judicial District Drug Court program.

Judge Lewis implemented a Drug Court in Holmes, Humphreys and Yazoo counties in January 2006. The program was later expanded to include a component to deal with the alcoholism problems of persons charged with driving under the influence.

Mississippi currently has 28 drug courts – 20 adult programs and eight juvenile programs. Drug courts now operate in Circuit Court Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19 and 21; in Youth Courts in Adams, DeSoto, Forrest, Hinds, Jackson, Madison, Pike and Rankin counties; in Municipal Courts in Columbia, Columbus and Jackson; and in Justice courts in Lee and Hinds counties.

Eight of those drug court programs were formed this year. The Mississippi Legislature during the 2008 Regular Session directed the State Drug Court Advisory Committee to work toward expanding drug court programs. Additional drug court programs are in the planning stages, said State Drug Court Coordinator Joey Craft.

More than 2,000 people are currently enrolled in Drug Court programs statewide, Craft said. Since January 2008, about 600 new people have been enrolled in drug courts statewide.

The first drug court was created in Mississippi in 1999. The Administrative Office of Courts began keeping records of the number of drug court graduates in November 2004. During the past four years, 690 people have graduated from drug court programs across the state.

Drug courts seek to rehabilitate drug-using offenders through drug treatment and intense supervision with drug testing and frequent court appearances. Drug courts offer the incentive of a chance to remain out of jail, and the sanction of a jail sentence if participants fail to remain drug-free and in compliance with all program requirements.

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