

2nd Circuit Drug Court graduation is November 20 in Gulfport

November 18, 2008

The Second Circuit Drug Court will celebrate a graduation at 2 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, in Gulfport. The ceremony will be held at the Isaiah Fredericks Community Center at 3312 Dr. Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Commissioner Christopher Epps of the Mississippi Department of Corrections will be the guest speaker. Circuit Judge Lisa Dodson will preside.

Twelve Harrison County residents are expected to graduate, said Drug Court Coordinator and Counselor Kim Williams.

After the graduation, 117 people will remain enrolled in the Second Circuit Drug Court program. The program includes participants from Hancock, Harrison and Stone counties.

This is the seventh graduation for the Second Circuit program, which was established in 2003.

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 Hinds and Lee 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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