

# **Drug Court conference to be held in Olive Branch May 5-7**

April 29, 2010

Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Mike Randolph and former New Orleans Saints star Deuce McAllister will kick off the Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals annual conference in Olive Branch May 5.

MADCP President Marcus Ellis of Walnut Grove, drug court coordinator for the 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Drug Court, will convene the training conference at 1 p.m. Justice Randolph, McAllister, and Olive Branch Mayor Sam Rikard will welcome participants during an opening ceremony at Whispering Woods Conference Center in Olive Branch.

The conference runs May 5-7. About 250 people, including judges, drug court staff, law enforcement, correctional officers and drug treatment providers, are expected to attend.

The sixth annual conference will include presentations from mental health and drug treatment professionals, law enforcement, corrections officers and judges. Conference speakers will discuss trends in teen culture and juvenile drug abuse, methamphetamine and prescription drug addiction, the interaction of drug addiction and mental illness, and the science of drug addiction, among other topics. Discussions will include strategies for dealing with addiction-driven craving which threaten to drag drug court participants back into substance abuse.

Among treatment experts scheduled to speak at the conference are counseling psychologist Lucy Underwood, Ph.D., of Parkwood Behavioral Health System in Olive Branch; Terrance Walton, director of treatment of the District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency; and biomedical consultant Dr. Leo Kadehjian of Palo Alto, Calif. Other speakers during the three-day program include:

- Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics officer Billy Baker;
- Attorney Pamela A. Ferrington of Natchez, who defends clients referred to drug court;
- Marc Fomby of Richland, a former police officer who provides training about juveniles, gangs and drugs;
- Shane Garrard, director of the Fairland residential treatment center in Dublin, Miss.;
- Christy Gutherz, Mississippi Department of Corrections Region II community corrections director;
- Denise Marsters, a certified alcohol and drug counselor and certified sex addiction therapist who works at A Bridge to Recovery and owns the McCoy House for Sober Living in Jackson;
- Donna Funderburke-McKinley of Birmingham, resource and education director of Safe Harbor;
- Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders of Natchez, who oversees the Sixth Circuit Drug Court in Adams, Amite, Franklin and Wilkinson counties;
- Mark Stovall, adolescent services coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse;

- Scott Sumrall, director of disaster preparedness and response for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health;
- Special Assistant Attorney General Jean Vaughan, director of the Attorney General's Cyber Crime Unit.

May is National Drug Court Month.

Mississippi has 21 adult drug court programs and 13 juvenile drug court programs. Statewide, more than 2,600 people are enrolled in drug courts.

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 be employed, 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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