

Third Circuit Drug Court to hold graduation Feb. 11 in Oxford

February 5, 2014

Retired Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice George C. Carlson Jr. of Batesville will be the guest speaker at the Third Circuit Drug Court graduation ceremony scheduled for 2 p.m. Feb. 11 at the Lafayette County Courthouse in Oxford. The ceremony will be in the main courtroom.

Circuit Judge Andrew K. Howorth will preside. The public is invited.

Seventeen people are expected to graduate. Graduates include five Lafayette County residents, six from Calhoun County, two from Tippah County, three from Union County, and one from Marshall County.

One hundred people have previously graduated from the Third Circuit Drug Court program, which began in 2008. The Feb. 11 ceremony will be the sixth graduation for the program, said Drug Court Coordinator Brandon Vance. Each participant must spend at least three years under the supervision of the Drug Court and comply with all program requirements before being eligible to graduate.

Vance said that 190 people will remain enrolled in the Third Circuit Drug Court program after the graduation.

Justice Carlson, who served as a Circuit Judge in the Seventeenth Circuit District before his 2001 appointment to the Supreme Court, said there was no drug court in his district while he was on the bench. "But thankfully, soon after my departure from the trial bench, the circuit judges in that district saw fit to establish what has become a very successful drug court program. Other districts, including the Third Circuit Court District, decided to establish drug courts," he said.

"I commend Judge Howorth, his fellow circuit judges, and Third Circuit Drug Court Coordinator Brandon Vance for their efforts in creating a successful program which has produced outstanding results. Former drug users who have committed crimes are being returned to their families drug-free and as productive citizens in society, with a low rate of recidivism."

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

Mississippi currently has 38 drug courts. About 3,400 people are enrolled in drug courts statewide.

#####