

Andy Taggart to speak at 3rd District Drug Court graduation Aug. 15

August 14, 2017

Andy Taggart will be the guest speaker at the Third Judicial District Drug Court graduation Aug. 15 at the Lafayette County Courthouse in Oxford. The ceremony will begin at 2 p.m. in the main courtroom.

Nineteen people are expected to graduate from the program. Thirteen other participants who are nearing completion of the program's requirements will be recognized during the ceremony, 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. More than 260 people are enrolled in the program.

The public is invited.

The ceremony will be the thirteenth graduation ceremony for the Drug Court that includes Lafayette, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Marshall, Tippah and Union counties. The program is supervised by Circuit Judges Andrew K. Howorth and Kelly Luther.

Taggart has previously shared the story of his son Brad's suicide in talks to other drug courts and the Conference of Trial and Appellate Court Judges. He has spoken at churches, to high school groups and on college campuses.

Brad Taggart, 21, committed suicide in the front yard of the family's Madison home on July 10, 2012. He left a letter that apologized for the grief he would cause and explained the physical, intellectual and psychological toll of drug addiction.

Andy Taggart, an attorney, author and frequent political commentator, is former executive director of the Mississippi Republican Party and former chief of staff to Gov. Kirk Fordice. He is former president of the Madison County Board of Supervisors and a member of the Mississippi Judicial Appointment Advisory Committee.

The mission of the Third District Drug Court is to enhance public safety by providing substance abusers with cost-effective, multi-disciplinary alternatives, including substance abuse treatment and monitoring. The mission also includes improving participants' quality of life and returning those participants to the community as productive, law-abiding citizens; reducing the rate of recidivism; and breaking the drug addiction cycle.

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 43 drug courts. There are 22 adult felony programs, with a drug court operating in every Circuit Court district in the state. There are 15 juvenile programs, three misdemeanor programs and three family drug courts. Drug courts may operate within Circuit Courts, Chancery Courts, Youth Courts, Justice Courts or Municipal Courts. More than 3,600 people are enrolled in drug courts statewide.

