

## **Jackson County Drug Court participants do community service**

May 19, 2005

Participants in the Jackson County Drug Court will take to the streets in Pascagoula on Saturday morning, May 21, to pick up litter as part of their continuing community service. Eight to 10 people are expected to begin work at 8 a.m. along U.S. 90.

Drug Court organizers and participants are calling attention to May as National Drug Court Month. Special activities are being conducted in courts throughout the country this month.

Twenty people are enrolled in Circuit Judge Robert Krebs' Jackson County Drug Court program. His Drug Court group began meeting weekly last October. Judge Krebs' program is designed to take two years for participants to complete.

A total of 109 people are enrolled in Drug Courts in George, Greene and Jackson counties, said Drug Court Coordinator Joanne Byrd. Circuit Judge Kathy King Jackson, who started the Drug Court program in the 19<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court District in George and Greene counties in November 2002, began meeting with other participants in Jackson County Drug Court in March 2004.

Drug Courts in Mississippi are special courts which 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. Participants are required to work, and if they dropped out of school, they must pursue a General Education Development (GED) degree.

Community service is an ongoing part of the Drug Court program. Drug Court participants must perform at least eight hours of community service work each month, Judge Krebs said. In the past, participants have painted, cleaned and served food at a local food pantry, painted the building used by Alcoholics Anonymous, and done painting, plumbing and other repairs at three area churches.

The Drug Court program accepts people charged with drug possession crimes, as well as some charged with embezzlement, prescription forgery and other crimes rooted in drug addiction. The Drug Court seeks to break the cycle of addiction that drives people to commit crimes.

Judge Krebs said, "It's a lifestyle change for the better and they come to realize that it is important to be a responsible citizen, to have a job, to take care of your children and to contribute something back to the community."

As of December 2004, 1,621 drug courts were in operation nationwide, according to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Thirteen Drug Courts operate in Mississippi.

For more information about drug court programs in Mississippi, go to the web site of the Mississippi Supreme Court at [www.mssc.state.ms.us](http://www.mssc.state.ms.us) and click on AOC.

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