

National Drug Court leader speaks to graduates Oct. 22 in Hernando

October 16, 2012

A leader in the national drug court movement will speak to graduation ceremonies of the 17th Circuit Drug Court and the DeSoto County Juvenile Drug Court on Oct. 22 in Hernando. The adult Drug Court graduation is scheduled for 2 p.m. in the main courtroom at the DeSoto County Courthouse at 2535 U.S. Highway 51. The juvenile Drug Court graduation is scheduled for 5 p.m. in Courtroom No. 4 at the DeSoto County Courthouse.

Guest speaker West Huddleston of Alexandria, Va., has served as chief executive officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) since 2006. He previously served as director of the National Drug Court Institute from 1998 to 2006.

Circuit Judges Robert P. Chamberlin and Jimmy McClure will preside over the 17th Circuit Drug Court graduation. Forty-six people are expected to graduate from the adult court program, the largest group of graduates ever for the 17th Circuit. This will be the fourth graduation ceremony for the program. A total of 72 people have previously graduated from the program, which began in 2006. The 17th Circuit Drug Court currently has 257 participants enrolled in a district which includes DeSoto, Panola, Tallahatchie, Tate and Yalobusha counties.

DeSoto County Court Judge Allen Couch Jr. will preside over the DeSoto County Juvenile Drug Court graduation. Two youths are expected to graduate. Forty are enrolled in the DeSoto County Juvenile Drug Court. About 30 juveniles have graduated from the program since it was established in 2005.

Reporters, photographers and editors are reminded that participants in the 5 p.m. graduation are juveniles and the program is a Youth Court proceeding. **Because of the confidentiality required by law in Mississippi Youth Court matters, members of the media are asked to refrain from publishing or broadcasting any information or photographs which would in any way identify any juvenile participant or family member in the Juvenile Drug Court.**

Huddleston is regarded as a pioneer in drug courts and other alternative sentencing strategies. He serves as an advisor or consultant to the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Drug Enforcement Administration, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, the Organization of American States, and as a faculty member of the National Judicial College.

Huddleston is the architect of the “All Rise” national campaign for drug courts. Huddleston was inspired by a Hinds County, Mississippi bailiff’s booming command to the audience, “all rise,” at the start of a December 2008 Drug Court program. Huddleston turned the traditional court opening words into the mantra for the Drug Court mission in communities nationwide:

“Whenever one person rises out of addiction and crime, we **all rise**. When a child is reunited with clean and sober parents, we **all rise**. When the intergenerational cycle of drug addiction in a family is broken and healing begins, we **all rise**. Whether the charge is driving

while impaired, theft, burglary or any number of other addiction-driven offenses, we **all rise** when a Drug Court guides the offender past the chaos and wreckage and toward recovery.”

Huddleston, a Memphis native, began his career as a licensed clinician working with misdemeanor and felony offenders. He worked in the Tennessee and Oklahoma justice systems to develop, implement and operate in-custody and community mental health and substance abuse treatment programs. He served as the director of two community corrections programs and as the interim director of a 125-bed pre-release correctional center. He was involved in creating the first two drug courts in the state of Oklahoma.

NADCP is a non-profit organization which provides training, technical assistance and support for drug court professionals; collects and disseminates information about drug court programs nationwide; and advocates for the establishment, growth and funding of drug courts. NADCP represents 27,000 professionals working in more than 2,500 drug courts located across the nation.

Mississippi currently has 43 drug courts. About 3,300 people are enrolled in drug courts statewide.

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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