



news

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Three to graduate from 18th Judicial District Wellness Court *More than two years of supervision and treatment ending for graduates*

CENTENNIAL, Colo. – After more than two years of intensive supervision and extensive treatment, three participants in the 18th Judicial District (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln counties) Wellness Court will graduate in a ceremony set for Aug. 1.

The Wellness Court (or Mental Health Court), presided over by Magistrate Bonnie McLean, enrolls participants who otherwise would have stayed in jail. With more than 40 participants, the court is saving Arapahoe County and state taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in incarceration costs by keeping offenders accountable and safely in their communities.

The court’s mission is to reduce recidivism of offenders with mental illness, promote public safety and improve quality of life for participants and their families with a cost-effective, integrated continuum of care through community resources. The Wellness Court holds defendants accountable and helps them to achieve long-term stability to become law-abiding citizens and successful family and community members.

“I am humbled by the hard work our graduates have put into the program as they worked toward this day,” Magistrate McLean said. “It is an honor to be part of a group of dedicated professionals who make the program work, and so gratifying to see people returning to their

communities and families with a new vision for their lives and new tools to help themselves succeed.”

The Wellness Court is supported by the district attorney’s office, public defender’s office, probation department, Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Department and Arapahoe Douglas Mental Health Network.

“Like other problem-solving courts in this district and elsewhere, the 18th Judicial District Wellness Court continues to prove itself a vitally important part of Colorado’s criminal justice system,” said 18th Judicial District Chief Judge William B. Sylvester. “These courts have made great strides in providing a variety of treatment options to those with mental health needs – sometimes options that would not have been available in prison.”

The graduation ceremony, the court’s fourth, is set for 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 1, immediately following the court’s usual 1 p.m. docket. The ceremony is in Courthouse One, Courtroom 201 of the Arapahoe County Justice Center, 7325 S. Potomac Street, in Centennial.

Note to news media: Under normal expanded media coverage rules, one video and one still camera will be allowed in the courtroom for the ceremony, and some participants may be available for interviews.