



# news

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**Denver Drug Court celebrates National Drug Court Month  
with Wednesday graduation ceremony**  
*Chief Justice Michael L. Bender, former Governor Bill Ritter to speak*

DENVER – The Denver Drug Court will hold a special graduation ceremony on Wednesday, May 18, 2011, to celebrate National Drug Court Month and the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the existence of drug courts.

Thirty-eight men and women are slated to graduate from the Denver Drug Court program on Wednesday, bringing the total number of graduates so far in 2011 to 102. In 2010, 232 people graduated from Denver Drug Court. Graduation marks a drug court participant's completion of a 12- to 24-month intensive treatment program that includes probation supervision, in-court review hearings, substantial judicial oversight and full accountability of the Drug Court participant.

“Our Drug Court is truly making a difference, reducing drug use and recidivism, reuniting families and making our community safer, and providing alternatives to incarceration that cost less and are more effective,” said Robert S. Hyatt, chief judge of the Denver District Court. “This graduation will recognize the men and women who have completed Drug Court and are preparing to reenter their community as productive members of society.”

The ceremony is scheduled to begin at 3 p.m. in the Jury Room, Room 100, of the Lindsey-Flanigan Courthouse, 520 W. Colfax Ave. Among those scheduled to speak are Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael L. Bender and former Governor Bill Ritter.

Denver Drug Court was originally established in 1994 as one of the first drug courts in the country. In 2007, the Denver Drug Court was redesigned to become more effective. The court is absorbing nearly 40 percent of the criminal filings that would otherwise land on a traditional district court docket, greatly reducing the amount of time the court needs to process a drug case.

National Drug Court Month is coordinated on a national level by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, which was established in 1994 to assist in the planning, implementation and operation of drug courts. What started in a Florida courtroom 22 years ago has become the nation's most successful strategy for dealing with substance-abusing offenders. The Denver Drug Court graduation is being held in concert with graduations in many of the 2,500 Drug Courts across the country.

Activities and commemorations during the month will center on the theme "Drug Courts: A Proven Budget Solution."