Superior Court of California
County of Santa Clara

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SANTA CLARA COUNTY DRUG TREATMENT COURTS HONOR GRADUATES

Department 17 in the Historic County Courthouse at 161 North 1st Street will be the scene when Santa Clara County Superior Court hosts a very special graduation ceremony on Wednesday, May 18, at 3:00 PM. As friends and relatives gather to help celebrate the occasion, 65 participants in the Santa Clara County Drug Treatment Court and Mental Health Drug Treatment Court programs will be honored for successfully completing the terms of their court-ordered treatment in lieu of jail time. This will be one of many graduation ceremonies that are held at various times during the year, and they often elicit a strong emotional response from those in attendance. For the graduates, this achievement constitutes a huge first step on the long road to recovery from a history of serious substance abuse.

The Drug Treatment Court was established as a pilot program in 1995, and was one of the first specialized courts of its type in the country. The companion Mental Health Drug Treatment Court, which provides assistance to individuals with mental health problems in addition to their substance abuse issues, was instituted in 1998. The goal of both programs is to avoid the high costs associated with incarcerating non-violent drug offenders by ordering a rigorous course of treatment, testing and rehabilitation as a condition of probation.

Drug and Mental Health Courts utilize a proven model that complements Proposition 36 and provides opportunities to apply principles that will improve outcomes and save money. The Drug Court model works because of the high degree of collaboration between local agencies, including treatment providers, Probation, Courts, prosecution and defense. This model includes regular drug testing and a coordinated strategy of using sanctions and incentives to respond to client compliance or lack of compliance. There is ongoing judicial interaction with each client which is one of the most important success factors cited by defendants. The effectiveness of the drug court model has been further demonstrated by the fact that over 1,600 of these courts have been established in all 50 states during the last 15 years. A recent national study showed that only about 16 percent of drug court graduates were re-arrested on felony charges within one year of graduation, as compared to a 43.5 percent recidivism rate among non-drug court graduates. Locally, court staff estimate that the Treatment Courts saved 281,399 jail days in Fiscal Year 2003-2004, which represents a cost savings of $12,522,255.

Results such as those cited above cannot be accomplished without significant cooperation between treatment providers, public health organizations, and the law and justice community. In Santa Clara County, the Superior Court is one part of the team which also includes representatives from community-based service providers, the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Alternate Defender's Office, Public Health nurses, Mental Health Department, Department of Correction, Adult Probation Department, and the Department of Alcohol and Drug Services. Superior Court Judge Steven V. Manley presides over both the Drug Treatment Court and Mental Health Drug Treatment Court, and will serve as master of ceremonies for the upcoming graduation celebration. Judge Manley was instrumental in the establishment of both Treatment Courts in Santa Clara County, and is a nationally recognized expert in the field of therapeutic and restorative justice.

For more information, please contact Kimberly Henderson (408) 491-4734.