

MENTAL HEALTH COURT

Newsletter; Volume 1, Issue 3 | Special Edition



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A MESSAGE FROM THE JUDGE

by Judge Jennifer Alcorta Waters

May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

There are exciting community activities planned throughout the month in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. The NAMI walk is scheduled for May 22, 2021 from 9 am to 11 am in Flagler park. Also, throughout the month of May, in honor of Mental Health Awareness month, you can tune into MCTV and see a short segment where Chief Judge Mirman and I discuss the Mental Health Court programs throughout the 19th Judicial Circuit. Every county in the 19th Circuit has its own Mental Health Court. Chief Judge Mirman is in charge of St. Lucie County Mental Health Court. Judge Wallace is in charge of Okeechobee’s Mental Health Court. Judge Menz runs Indian River’s Mental Health Court. I am privileged to run the Martin County program.

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the US live with a mental illness (more than 50 million in 2019). The 19th Judicial Circuit’s Mental Health Courts have had more than 2700 clients (with more than 3700 cases).

More than 1500 clients have successfully completed the program. Currently, the 19th Circuit has more than 353 individuals enrolled in one of the circuit’s Mental Health Courts.

Mental Health Court is challenging, and our clients work very hard to succeed, and ultimately, to graduate. We assist all of our clients with stable housing, as well as medication management. All clients are required to routinely drug test and attend appropriate therapeutic treatment. If able, our clients are strongly encouraged to obtain ongoing, stable employment. Yuri Parraga, our Mental Health Case Manager, has developed partnerships with three different community employers to assist our clients with permanent and stable employment. Right now, I am proud that we have more clients employed than ever before!

Martin County currently has 75 participants. Notably, Martin County’s recidivism rate is approximately 8.5% for our successful graduates,

while the average recidivism rate for an individual involved in the criminal justice system is higher than 60.9%. These numbers are remarkable and speak to the power and success of our great program!



MEET THE TEAM



JUDGE JENNIFER WATERS
PRESIDING JUDGE



KATIE ALONZO
PUBLIC DEFENDER



VICKI NICHOLS
STATE ATTORNEY



YURI PARRAGA
COURT CASE MANAGER



MICHELLE DERRICO
PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE



STEVE CANNON
CLIENT CASE MANAGER



KRISTIN TRENHAM, ARNP
NURSE PRACTITIONER



ELISA SNYDER
MARTIN COUNTY JAIL

DR. EFRAIN ACOSTA-LEON
PSYCHIATRIST

CAROL HARPER
CLERK

DEE SIEVERT
JUDICIAL ASSISTANT

CARMEN SLOANE
PROBATION

ANDREA BRINER-JOHNSON
PSYCHIATRIC ARNP

SHARYN KRIM
PROJECT LIFT

HUGH DOVE
DOVES NEST

DONALD SELBY
DOVES NEST MENTAL
HEALTH HOUSE

CASSANDRA GORDON
APD

BRANDON GRIMISON
FACT TEAM

KIMBERLY COMER
PEER SPECIALIST

JULYNE VIAU
CORAL SHORES

CHARRISE VAN BIESEN
SEFBHN

AMANDA BUSBIN
SEFBHN

LAURA MEDINA
FACT TEAM

MAKEDA JAMES
FORENSIC SPECIALIST

HEAR FROM THE TEAM

Katie: Martin County Mental Health Court is doing wonderful things for our clients and the community! I am proud to be a part of it and thankful for the hard work of our Judge, State, and amazing case managers.

Vicki: Being a part of the Mental Health Court team has definitely been an experience. It has certainly grown on me over the last couple of years.

Kristin: I'm so blessed to be part of Mental Health Court and I can't wait to grow with the program.

Michelle: I'm proud and honored to work with an amazing team of professionals devoted to and who work tirelessly to advocate for the betterment of the social, emotional and physical well-being of individuals with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. With our steadfast advocacy efforts, we are enriching their lives and creating hope.

Yuri: Being a part of the Mental Health Court team and seeing the positive impact this program has in our clients' lives is why I love my job even on the toughest day.

Steve: The people we serve are demeaned, disrespected, misjudged, and mistreated. It is truly rewarding to help those that would otherwise not receive help.

Elisa: So fortunate to be a part of such a collaborative group that works so hard towards the best interests of those served.

HEAR FROM THE GRADUATES

Greg: Mental Health Court has eased my paranoia about the government a great deal! Through Mental Health Court I learned that not all Judges, Prosecutors, and case workers are out to incarcerate us, but many - especially in Mental Health Court are out to help us and do care for us!

Stephen: Thanks to everyone who works so hard in the Mental Health Court program in Martin County, from Judge Waters to Miss Yuri, you have all helped me so much. The program has helped me in so many ways: I can live a normal life now and be successful in it. If it wasn't for Martin County's excellent mental health team I don't know where I would be today. Thank you all so much!!!

Kristin: I'm grateful to Judge Metzger for the opportunity that I had to regroup and organize the pieces of my life. The team with the Mental Health Court was very helpful in guidance and accountability. At first, everything was difficult. Just making it to court and appointments were my first challenge. Along with testing, a very important part of accountability and recovery. That, grew into building new relationships with family members, friends, and redeeming myself with others. Today, I am reaping the benefits of those concentrated efforts. I enjoy seeing my daughters and others whom have learned to trust me. I also enjoy knowing that I made these choices and this is my life now. One that I can be proud of and look forward to going to work each day where my business speaks for itself. Change is good! I want to thank Judge Metzger, Yuri, and the team for believing in me. I will continue to grow, learn and go on to accomplish even greater goals!

Faith: Mental Health Court gave me a second chance. The program kept me out of jail and in treatment. I am very grateful for the program and the staff.

Cody wants to share that he has maintained stability, continues to be employed full-time, has been traveling, and has recently started to consider returning to school for a career that allows him to help others in the way that our program was able to help him.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Aspiring rapper, 'Pierre the Truth' uses voice to laud life's turnaround in Mental Health Court

Melissa E. Holsman Treasure Coast Newspapers
Published 6:01 a.m. ET Mar. 31, 2021

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Our court and one of our clients were featured in a TCPalm article.

We have a new partnership with Speed Lube for employment for our clients!

Our team received a special invitation by Judge Nicole Menz to attend Indian River County Mental Health Court's graduation to share our client's 'Support Team' song.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WHAT'S NEXT?

Our Mental Health Court Judge Jennifer Waters and Chief Judge Lawrence Mirman speak about Mental Health Court with Martin County's Human Services Department Administrator, Michelle Miller. Watch them on the Martin County YouTube: MartinCountyFL.

The 19th Judicial Circuit website will be sharing a video (thank you, Wendy Parent!) highlighting our circuit's treatment courts and featuring the 'Support Team' song and our team.

NAMI Martin County is holding a 'Walk in the park for Mental Health Awareness.'

Our next Martin County Mental Health Court graduation is coming up! Reach out to the team for more information.