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Camden Vicinage to Hold Drug Court Graduation Ceremony

The Camden Vicinage will hold its drug court graduation ceremony on Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 2 p.m. in Courtroom 63 at the Hall of Justice, 101 S. Fifth St., Camden.

Approximately 15 drug court participants will be recognized for successfully completing the rigorous program of substance abuse treatment and intensive supervision. Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz will address the graduates and their friends and families.

“Please join me as we celebrate the graduates who have transformed themselves in their recovery efforts and also as we recognize the drug court team members who work tirelessly to ensure that each participant has the tools and resources needed to overcome addiction,” Judge Silverman Katz said.

The keynote speaker will be local author Ryan Ouimet, who will talk about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and unsafe firearm use. Criminal Presiding Judge Edward J. McBride Jr., who leads the drug court team, will preside over the ceremony.

The Camden Vicinage drug court program began in 1996. Along with the Essex Vicinage, it was the first voluntary drug court program in New Jersey. Drug court has since become mandatory across the state.

As of January, 360 participants have graduated from the Camden Vicinage’s drug court program.

Drug courts are a highly-specialized team process that function within the existing Superior Court structure to assist nonviolent drug offenders in rehabilitation. The program is unique in the criminal justice environment because it relies upon a collaborative relationship between criminal justice and drug treatment professionals. The drug court judge heads a team of court staff, attorneys, probation officers, substance abuse evaluators, and treatment counselors who work cooperatively to support and closely monitor a participant’s recovery.

Drug court programs are rigorous, requiring completion of four phases during five years of drug and alcohol treatment and testing. Participants follow a tightly structured regime that includes random and frequent drug testing, intensive probation supervision, and regular court reporting.