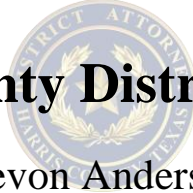


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DA Anderson to Speak at Drug Court Graduation

18 defendants graduate from intensive, specialized program

Today District Attorney Devon Anderson will speak at the Harris County STAR (Success Through Addiction Recovery) Court graduation. The specialty court program offers intensive treatment, goals, and supervision to non-violent repeat drug offenders instead of jail time.

The District Attorney's Office works together with the Harris County District Court Administration, Defense Attorneys, Probation Department, the Sheriff's Department, the Clerk's Office, and a network of community-based providers to enhance public safety and reduce recidivism by providing treatment to non-violent drug offenders for at least 12 months, depending on the participant's progress.

"Drug Court, similar to the other specialty courts, requires the defendants to accept accountability for the crimes they've committed," said District Attorney Anderson. "At the same time, the offenders are receiving appropriate treatment and obtaining skills that allow them to remain law abiding citizens. Programs like this one enhance public safety and reduce crime in our community."

The Harris County STAR Court started screening defendants for court admission in 2003. 80% have not re-offended. Defendants must meet a certain criteria to qualify to enter the program, which includes pleading guilty. The 18 defendants who will graduate today have maintained their goals through on-going treatment, have stable housing and are engaged in productive and pro-social activities. Each of the graduates has developed an action plan, which outlines what they need to do to maintain their mental wellness and remain outside of the criminal justice system.

"Being a former STAR court judge, I saw the hard work graduates would go through to reach recovery," said D.A. Anderson. "I commend our prosecutors, the district court judges and other agencies who volunteer their time to help the offenders in this program."

The STAR court team meets weekly to staff each of the cases before bringing the participant before the judge for their weekly court appearance. Participants must adhere to a judicially supervised treatment plan that is monitored by judicial staff, probation staff, clinicians and caseworkers. There are 149 defendants in the program. There have been more than 400 graduates since 2003.

NOTE: Cameras are allowed in the courtroom. The graduation will be at 301 Fannin in Room#: 208 at 3p.m.