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DA Lykos Presents \$500,000 to Support DWI "S.O.B.E.R." Court Program

District Attorney Patricia Lykos on Thursday presented Judge Robin Brown with half a million dollars to finance alcohol monitoring systems that play an essential role in Harris County's *SOBER: Saving Ourselves By Education and Recovery* anti-DWI court program. There is no cost to taxpayers, as the equipment monitoring is being paid for with money seized from criminal enterprises.

The funds will be used to support ignition lock and camera systems that require a clean breath-sample and proven sobriety before DWI offenders are allowed to start their vehicle. In addition, for non-driving participants, portable alcohol detection devices are assigned to them for use at work and in their residences.

Harris County's three *SOBER* court dockets are supervised by Judge Robin Brown (presiding), Judge Diane Bull and Judge Natalie Fleming. The program utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach to thoroughly screen candidates for inclusion and then hold them accountable through strict supervision during and after treatment. Participants remain in the program for two years.

Judges have noted a sharp decline in recidivism rates for those enrolled in the program. Since it was initiated in late 2008, a total of 328 DWI offenders have participated in the program and used alcohol detection devices to comply with the terms of their *SOBER* court sentences.

"By promoting and enforcing abstinence and rehabilitation, we are making remarkable progress towards keeping DWI offenders off our streets," said Judge Brown. "The financial support from our District Attorney today will help keep this innovative program operational, keeping all of us safer."

Lykos added, "Harris County has a notorious reputation for leading the nation in intoxication fatality accidents. The tough but thoughtful approach being taken by our judges is an essential element in changing that tragic reality. I will continue to do whatever it takes so that Harris County's criminal justice system has the tools it needs to effectively remove intoxicated drivers from our roadways and make our communities safer," Lykos concluded.

Lykos has developed a long-term strategy to rid our streets of impaired drivers. Along with the *SOBER* DWI drug court program, Lykos has staffed and administered *No Refusal* initiatives which mandate blood samples for impaired drivers who refuse breath tests. *No Refusal* has taken more drunk drivers off the streets than ever before. The Texas Department of Transportation has funded the program to ensure that it will operate every weekend for the next three years.

In addition to the DWI drug court program and *No Refusal*, Lykos has also implemented a supervision and treatment program for first-time intoxicated drivers who meet strict qualifications. This DWI intervention, education, and treatment program mandates treatment and counseling to "cure" offenders, as opposed to the previous plan of jailing offenders for a few days and then releasing them to the streets.

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