

Justice Initiatives Inc.



For Immediate Release

Monday, September 19, 2005

Justice Initiatives to Hold Fundraiser

Justice Initiatives, Inc., a new non-profit established in support of the Mecklenburg County Court System, is hosting its first fundraising event on Thursday, September 22, 2005, from 7:00-9:00 PM. Judy Harrison-Barry and Dee-Dee Harris are co-hosting this invitation-only event at the home of Ms. Harris. Monies raised will be specifically earmarked for treatment and other services needed by clients enrolled in the groundbreaking and award-winning Mecklenburg County Drug Treatment Court.

Justice Initiatives, Inc. believes this community's only responsible choice is to provide our court system with the supplemental funding needed for innovative and non-traditional programs that exceed the core functions and basic necessities covered by the State.

In an ideal world, government funding would provide every penny needed for a comprehensive justice system. In the real world, however, government funds are limited, change from year to year and cover no more than core functions and basic necessities, at best. The NC Judicial Branch receives less than 3% of the overall State budget and the Mecklenburg County Courts receive less than 7% of that amount despite registering approximately 13% of the State's major crimes, 10% of all filings and dispositions and 9% of the State's population.

The Drug Treatment Court (DTC) is an innovative and non-traditional court-sponsored program aimed at stopping the cycle of abuse of alcohol and other drugs that feed criminal activity. The program offers substance addicted offenders charged with non-violent offenses an alternative to incarceration. Program participants are held accountable for their behavior in a rehabilitative environment that provides a holistic approach to substance abuse while ensuring the safety of citizens of Mecklenburg County. Funding for DTC has come from a mix of State, County and grant sources. After several years of support, though, the grant funding is expiring and institutional funding has not yet risen to a level that offsets what has been lost. The purpose of this event is to raise the funds necessary to help bridge the gap until the recurring institutional dollars can be procured.

The 2001 North Carolina Treatment Court Outcome Evaluation of the State's original five adult drug treatment courts completed by Dr. Amy Craddock found that only 18% of drug treatment court graduates were rearrested compared to 44% in the control or comparison group. In Mecklenburg County, the recidivism rate was even lower at 11%. A series of national studies have also shown that for every dollar invested in these programs, savings between \$3.00 and \$7.00 have been realized. Incarceration of drug-using offenders costs between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per person, per year. In contrast, a comprehensive drug court system typically costs between \$2,500 and \$4,000 annually for each offender. More importantly, though, are the human and societal benefits. In 2004, the FIRST DTC Program had a total of seven babies born clean and sober to participating mothers.

No current court officials or employees sit on the board of Justice Initiatives. Also, Justice Initiatives is not affiliated with any political party, but works with and welcomes the support of partisan organizations to advance its mission.

For more information regarding this news release, contact Todd Nuccio, Trial Court Administrator, at 704-347-7805, or email to todd.nuccio@nccourts.org.

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