

# News Release



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## Ninth Judicial Circuit Drug Court Graduation Set for Tomorrow

*City of Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen will address graduates*

When City of Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen delivers the commencement address scheduled for this Wednesday for two Ninth Judicial Circuit Drug Court graduates his words will have special meaning. Just over two years ago one of the graduates broke into the Chief's house. This graduate has now paid Chief Mullen restitution for the damage from the break-in and is preparing to start a new life.

"Drug Court is a lifesaving courtroom staffed by criminal justice professionals who are specially trained to actually treat addiction and mental illness. It is unlike any courtroom that you've ever seen in that the judge, the prosecutor, the defense attorney, probation, treatment professionals, everyone gets together and they actually work as a team to try to help drug addicted offenders get their lives back and get clean and sober," stated West Huddleston, on CNN, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals who will not be able to attend the commencement. Chris Deutsch, Director of Communications, will attend for the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Drug courts, nationwide, have proven to be an innovative alternative for individuals caught up in the cycle of re-arrests due to an addiction to drugs and alcohol. The Ninth Judicial Circuit (Charleston and Berkeley Counties) Adult Drug Court, which was created in 1998, provides a cost-effective alternative to traditional prosecution and incarceration of nonviolent offenders with substance abuse problems. The program is designed to promote self-sufficiency and personal responsibility through accountability. Participants plea to an average prison term of five years before entering the program which takes at least a year to complete. To graduate from the program, participants must have a job and/or completing their education, pay back restitution, attend weekly counseling sessions, meet treatment goals, be subject to random daily drug testing, pay thirty dollars weekly toward the cost of the program, have a sponsor, and attend self-help meetings. Incentives and sanctions are used to mold behavior.

The ceremony will be at 4:00 p.m. this Wednesday, February 5, 2014, at the Charleston County Judicial Center at 100 Broad Street. Federal Magistrate Judge Bruce H. Hendricks, who presides over a drug court for the District of South Carolina, also will attend.

For more information or if you have any questions please contact Debbie Walker the Drug Court Coordinator at (843) 958-5189 or [dwalker@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:dwalker@charlestoncounty.org).

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