

## **Hinds County Drug Courts celebrate with family picnic on Saturday**

May 11, 2007

Three Hinds County drug courts will celebrate National Drug Court Month with a picnic at the Jackson Zoo 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 12.

Participants from the felony adult Hinds County Drug Court and the Hinds County Justice Drug Court are expected to attend, along with members of their families. The family-oriented picnic has become an annual event.

Members of the Drug Court teams, including judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement and treatment professionals, are expected to attend. Staff from the recently created Hinds County Youth Drug Treatment Court will also participate.

Brenda Mathis, coordinator of the felony adult Hinds County Drug Court, said one of the elements of the Drug Court program is to not only help addicted offenders deal with a drug problem, but also to help mend families. Some Drug Court program participants have been able to regain custody of their children after receiving drug treatment. Family members of participants – husbands, wives, parents and children – have stated at previous Drug Court functions that their families have been brought back together after their loved ones got help for their addiction.

Mathis said, “The concept is to bring families together. A lot of times, drug offenders don’t have family contacts because they are on drugs.”

Hinds County Court Judge William Skinner, who supervises the adult felony Drug Court and the newly created Youth Drug Treatment Court, said having supportive family members helps Drug Court participants deal with their drug problems.

“What makes Drug Courts work is when you have family support. The ones that tend to fail are the ones that don’t have family support and community support,” Judge Skinner said.

One of the biggest problems facing the Drug Courts is dealing with the adverse influences of family members who are themselves drug users and alcoholics. Judge Skinner, who recently formed the Youth Drug Treatment Court, said he wants to work with the Department of Human Services to deal with alcohol and drug abusing parents of Drug Court participants.

“We can get these kids clean, but if you put them back into that same kind of environment where there is drug and alcohol abuse, then you haven’t done anything,” Judge Skinner said.

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