



# NEWSLETTER

January | 2023



## From the CACJ Staff



The Council of Accountability Court Judges staff wishes you a very happy new year full of health, happiness, and cheer.

Happy Holidays!

**Taylor Jones**, Executive Director  
**Josh Becker**, Assistant Director  
**Christina Frazier**, Operations & Communication Coordinator  
**Sacha Greene**, Certification Officer II  
**Jeffrey Holiday**, Certification Officer II  
**Kimberly Howard**, Training & Operations Manager  
**Alison Lerner**, General Counsel  
**Rachel Meyer**, Data & Research Program Manager  
**Madison Nash**, Certification Officer  
**Sherna Tolbert**, Treatment Fidelity Program Monitor  
**Tara Zellous**, Treatment Services Program Manager

## Contents

- Appalachian Judicial Circuit Accountability Courts – pg. 2
- Chatham County Family Treatment Court – pg. 2
- Cobb County Family Treatment Court – pg. 3
- Conasauga Drug Court – pg. 3
- Fulton County Accountability Court – pg. 4
- Fayette County DUI/Drug Court – pg. 4
- Ocmulgee Circuit Family Treatment Court – pg. 5
- Henry County Veterans Treatment Court – pg. 6
- Model Court: Cobb County Veterans Accountability & Treatment Court – pg. 7
- Model Court: Douglas County Misdemeanor DUI/Drug Court - pg. 9
- Career Opportunities – pg. 10



*Staff from the Appalachian Judicial Circuit's Accountability Courts, including Mrs. Claus (Carol Daves) and Santa (Larry Clemmons)*

## **Appalachian Judicial Circuit Hosts Annual Participant Christmas Party**

The Appalachian Judicial Circuit hosted their annual Christmas Party on December 8. Each Christmas, the staff of the Appalachian Judicial Circuit's Accountability Courts host a Christmas party for participants and their children. The Accountability Courts consists of the Felony Drug Court, the Veterans Treatment Court, HELP Court (Mental Health), and Family Treatment Court.

The Accountability Courts receive donations from the community to help provide the gifts for the participants' children, as well as participants from the Department of Community Supervision's Day Reporting Center. This year, the Accountability Courts were able to provide gifts for 167 participants.

The Appalachian Accountability Courts would like to thank Pickens County Sheriff Donnie Craig for the generous gift from the Sheriff's Foundation that allowed us to purchase the gifts and Mount Zion Baptist Church and Pastor Tony Ramirez for the use of their facility.

***Submitted by Chris Holt, Appalachian Circuit Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator***

## **Chatham County Family Treatment Court Holiday Court**

Chatham County Family Treatment Court held their annual holiday court on December 20, 2022. We are as always very appreciative of our community partners CASA and DFCS for providing our parents with gifts to share with their children. This is a treat and makes a difference in our families. Many of our parents are often just starting a job, making minimum wage, working low hours while they attend treatment and sometimes have no job. This challenge is often an issue for finance and would be a burden with purchasing gifts for their children. We not only had gifts but exchanged ornaments with our participants, shared stories of old and new holiday traditions, some good food, hot cocoa, apple cider, and candy canes. This year we were able to hear the soft mellow voices of two of our talented participants with a Christmas song, which others present joined in with singing.

***Submitted by Latrell Gulotta, Chatham County Family Treatment Court Coordinator***



# Cobb County Family Treatment Court Talent Show & Dinner

On Wednesday, November 16, the Cobb County Drug Treatment Court (DTC) hosted participants and staff to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual “Be Grateful Dinner” and Participant Talent Show where everyone enjoyed great food, fun, and fellowship. The delicious dinner from Jim N Nick’s BBQ was sponsored by Restoring Lives Alliance, LLC which is the 501(3)c organization that provides financial assistance to the Cobb County accountability courts. The Cobb DTC judge and team continually emphasize the importance of “sober fun” outings and are intentional about providing these types of opportunities for the program participants throughout the year. Several participants performed in the talent show and the winners were chosen by loudest applause. The evening was a great success!

*Submitted by Porsha Middlebrook, Cobb County Drug Treatment Court Coordinator*



## Conasauga Drug Court Hosts Second Annual Christmas Party for Participants and Their Families

Several community partners came together and made it possible for approximately 250 participants, graduates, family members, and treatment staff to join Superior Court Judge Jim Wilbanks at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conasauga Drug Court Christmas Party. Dinner was served to all as the program participants and guests visited with special guests including Mr. and Mrs. Claus, The Grinch, and Cindy Lou Who. All the children in attendance received presents from Santa. Numerous gift cards were handed out to attendees that were also donated to the program from community partners.

*Submitted by Terry Sosebee, Conasauga Drug Court Coordinator*





## Fulton County Accountability Court Celebrates Holiday Season

Fulton County Accountability Court celebrated the holiday season with two important incentive events for participants. In association with the Atlanta Bar Association - Family Division, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4706, the Hot Atlanta P-Funk Steppers, Hope and Healing Foundation, the Public Defender's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and, of course, everyone at Superior Court, the program was able to provide a bounty of holiday gifts for the children and grandchildren of participants. The program also hosted a holiday incentive store. Participants were able to use their "holiday incentive bucks" to buy household items, small appliances, and holiday gifts.

In addition to the Accountability Court staff, who wrapped gifts late into the night, we would like to say a special thank you to:

- Emily Yu, Dawn Smith, and Adam Gleklen at the Atlanta Bar Association, Family Division
- Randy McFadden at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4706
- The Hot Atlanta P-Funk Steppers
- Marilyn Primovic at the Public Defender's Office
- Rewa Collier with the District Attorney's Office

***Submitted by John Collins, Fulton County Accountability Court Director***

## Fayette County DUI/Drug Court Graduation and Holiday Party

On December 7, 2022 Fayette County DUI/Drug held its final graduation of 2022 with four participants crossing over as program alumni. Additionally, the program Board of Advisors sponsored the first Annual Holiday Party.

***Submitted by Christa Grayson, Fayette County DUI/Drug Court Coordinator***



## Ocmulgee Family Treatment Court Graduation

Mr. Allan C. Peart entered Family Treatment Court in April 2021 after failing a drug screen for DFCS in December 2020. Mr. Peart has worked third shift on his job as a cook at the Waffle House for 23 years. He claims that he only tried “something” a co-worker had given him to stay awake. That something was in fact methamphetamine. Mr. Peart was adamant that he did not have a drug problem and that one night at work was the only night he had ever used any type of illegal drugs and or alcohol. Alan was also adamant that he has the best children ever and that they mean the world to him; therefore, he’d do anything necessary to keep his children in his home and custody.

Allan, as he likes to be called, has two beautiful children, a daughter aged 9 and a son aged 14. These children mean the world to Mr. Peart. The Department of Family and Children Services were made aware of issues concerning mental health/emotional neglect of Mr. Peart’s son. This concern was merely a cry from the child, as the family was dealing with some traumatic times. The mother of these children abandoned the family about two and a half years ago due to her own drug addiction. By the time DFCS became involved, Mrs. Peart was so engulfed in her addiction that when she would have supervised visits by DFCS she would lie down on the ground at the park and be asleep the entire visit. Soon after this incident DFCS and the FTC team decided that visits with their mother were not in the children’s best interest until she became clean and sober.



A testament as to how much Mr. Allan loves his children, he once stated in a treatment group session that, “maybe I should allow the kids to go into foster care, so they can have the nicer things that I cannot afford to give them!” Mr. Peart had poor housekeeping skills, poor money management skills, and the family was without transportation. For our FTC team, this thinking and circumstances were not an option. It is through treatment that Mr. Peart discovered who he was as a man and father, which made him recognize that healthy living, love, positive values, and grit are the things that create successful people and families. The home became recognizable as a clean and safe place to live, Mr. Peart began to budget his money and save, and then he obtained transportation. Mr. Peart never tested positive during his 20 months in Family Treatment Court. Allan only received one sanction for missing court, in phase one, when he was struggling to juggle being a single father, work third shift, and completing the demands of FTC.

Throughout his time in FTC, Mr. Allan Peart became one of the most loveable participants in the court, not only with the team, but with his peers, as well. Mr. Peart even embodied the skills and information he learned through FTC, to complete teach backs and assist the newer participants in the program. Throughout the course of Allan’s phases with FTC, the team has seen tremendous strides and improvement, so much so that his family preservation case was closed at least eight months prior to his graduation. Mr. Peart states that it wasn’t until he entered the program and took Thinking for A Change, Seeking Safety, and Strengthening Families that he recognized how his childhood and prior adult traumas were holding him back from being a better father.

As of December 19, 2022, Mr. Peart has successfully completed Family Treatment Court, and he and his children are all together, happy, and healthy.

***Submitted by Marqueta Stanton, Ocmulgee Circuit Family Treatment Court Coordinator***



## Henry County Veterans Treatment Court Graduation

Henry County Veterans Treatment Court held their 5th commencement at the Veterans Memorial Wall at Heritage Park in Henry County on a very crisp December 2nd morning. VTC has graduated 16 veterans to date. This graduation brings some very special accomplishments for our veterans. These vary as widely as our veterans and their experiences. One of our graduates purchased his very first home! Another earned a certificate in grant writing to enable support of other veterans through his own organization. One of our graduates spent years in seclusion only venturing out of his house once or twice a year and now he volunteers with veteran organizations and is also an AA sponsor. The mayor of the city of McDonough, Sandra Vincent, was the keynote speaker, and she did not disappoint in her personalized remarks that captured the spirit of accomplishments in our three graduating veterans. Judges Palmer and Bailey officiated and delivered a warm send-off for our cool event.

*Submitted by Craig Ogilvie, Henry County Accountability Court Director*



The Gwinnett County Mental Health Court program will celebrate its 10-year anniversary on Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. in the GJAC Auditorium. Please join us in celebrating the participants, staff, agencies, and community that support our program. Hors d'oeuvres will be provided.

*Submitted by Chris Sconiers, Sr., Gwinnett Judicial Circuit Accountability Court Programs Assistant Director*

## Model Courts Feature

The goal of Georgia's Accountability Court Model Court program is to recognize the great work of accountability courts across the state, as well as identify strong programs that may serve as mentors for other courts. Programs identified as Model Courts are those that have met and exceeded adherence to Georgia's Standards as dictated by strong performance on certification and peer review processes. To recognize the talent and expertise of the accountability court community, each month CACJ will recognize a model court or two and their work in the substance use and mental health fields.

### **Cobb County Veterans Accountability & Treatment Court Model Veterans Treatment Court (2022-2025)**



#### **Cobb County Veterans Accountability & Treatment Court Team Members**

**Judges - Chief Judge Robert D. Leonard, II, Presiding VATC Judge & Judge Angela Z. Brown, Back-up VATC Judge**  
**Coordinator – Katelyn Parker**  
**Case Manager – Ramona Burkett**  
**Mentor Coordinator – Ernie Hines**  
**Prosecutor – Bailey Rogers**  
**Defense Attorney – Grady Moore**  
**Law Enforcement – Deputy Diane Watts, Deputy Jonathan Granger**  
**VA Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist – Katherine Andrade**  
**Work Source Cobb – Sherrod Jones**  
**Treatment Provider – Conrad Valcy**  
**Accountability Court Director – Jennifer Tillery**

**Court Type:** Veterans Treatment Court

**Presiding Judge:** The Honorable Robert D. Leonard, II has presided over the program since May 2022. Judge Angela Z. Brown serves as the back-up judge.

**Coordinator:** Katelyn Parker has served as Coordinator for five years.

**Program Inception Date:** June 13, 2014

**Number of Graduates to Date:** 57

**Current Program Census:** 11

**Recidivism Rate:** 7%

**Innovative Practices/Unique Programming:**

**Ms. Parker:** “We work with our local community partners and the veteran community to provide the best program options for our participants. We partner with Chattahoochee Tech Occupational Therapy department, local vet centers, and American Legion Post 29 who provide suits to every participant who graduates from our program. We also do experiential treatment outings and volunteer opportunities with our participants - we have fed the homeless at MUST ministries, volunteered at the Marietta Veterans Day parade, taken hiking trips, held softball games, and participated in tai chi. We are unique in that we have several members of our staff that are veterans themselves (3). Lastly, our mentor program is robust - 28 volunteer veterans from the community who provide their time to help our participants. We are able to provide a one-on-one partnership of mentor to mentee.”

**Why does the judge choose to preside over the accountability court? What does the judge hope to accomplish as a model court?**

**Judge Leonard:** “I have a heart for helping to ensure that no veteran is left behind. One of my regrets in life is that I never served in the armed forces. The Cobb Veterans Accountability and Treatment Court is my way to give back and fill that void. I believe that these men and women have sacrificed so much to protect all our freedoms that they deserve every opportunity to change and go on to live a productive and healthy life. As a model court, I hope that our team can be used as a resource to other veterans courts or circuits exploring the possibility of starting a Veterans Court.”

**What is the coordinator most proud of in terms of the program’s success? What does she hope to accomplish as a model court?**

**Ms. Parker:** “I am most proud of our participants and graduates who have made lasting changes in their lives. From sobriety milestones, renewed family relationships, new jobs, driver’s licenses obtained, college degrees earned, and a healthier body, mind, and spirit. My hope as a model court is to serve every veteran in our program with the best and most effective treatment and program standards.”

**What is something you wish you had known at program inception that you hope to impart to newer courts?**

**Ms. Parker:** “Being a part of an accountability court really requires a passion for helping others and it is a holistic approach with many different people from varying backgrounds. When each member of the team buys in, that is where the magic happens and that is when you can be the most effective program for your participants.”

**Anything else you wish to include?**

**Ms. Parker:** “It is an honor to be a part of Cobb VATC and make an impact on the lives of our veteran community each and every day.”





# Douglas County Misdemeanor DUI/Drug Court Model DUI Court (2021-2024)



## Douglas County Misdemeanor DUI/Drug Court Team Members

Judges – Honorable Eddie Barker & Honorable Brian Fortner  
Coordinator – Joshua Bess  
Case Manager – Nilsa Martin  
Probation Officer – David Gonzales  
Clinical Director – Josh Nation  
Defense Attorney – Craig Colsky  
Prosecutor – Dawn Scotland  
Law Enforcement – Steve Simpson  
Evaluator – Lynn Tankersly

**Court Type:** DUI Court

**Presiding Judge:** Chief Judge Eddie Barker has presided over Track 1 of the program for nine years, and Judge Brian Fortner has presided over Track 2 for four years.

**Coordinator:** Joshua Bess has served as Coordinator for one year.

**Program Inception Date:** April 1, 2013

**Number of Graduates to Date:** 226

**Current Program Census:** 53

### **Innovative Practices/Unique Programming:**

**Judge Barker:** “Since 2016, the Douglas County DUI/Drug Court has consisted of multiple treatment tracks. Currently, there are three separate tracks in which our participants are placed based upon their risk/needs level as shown from their clinical assessment. This allows participants to receive treatment from various modalities that are appropriate for their risk/needs. Additionally, our participants come into our program from both State and Superior Courts. We work in cooperation with the Douglas County Adult Felony Drug Court to place some of their applicants into our treatment tracks when appropriate. This process of cooperation allows us to provide a more targeted treatment plan and level of supervision for the needs of the participants based upon their assessment rather than just what their actual criminal charges were. Our focus is always on reducing recidivism whether individuals are dealing with alcohol or drug addiction or both.”

### **Why does the judge choose to preside over the accountability court? What does the judge hope to accomplish as a model court?**

**Judge Barker:** “I established the DUI Court program as a way to provide a treatment alternative to those individuals that were constantly appearing in my court because of substance abuse issues, particularly alcohol. There was an obvious need to break that constant cycle of incarceration in so many individuals’ lives due to addiction. Having learned more about the power of addiction and treatment modalities designed to help those that choose to make a change in their lives motivates me to provide that opportunity to those in need. This program may be the last opportunity for someone to learn how to lead a fulfilling life in recovery. Court sessions are designed to reinforce those treatment lessons learned and provide support for their recovery.”

**Judge Fortner:** “I preside over an accountability court because I believe in them. I came from a family that experienced tremendous suffering because of addiction. I watched members of my family commit crimes and suffer multiple periods of incarceration. The post incarceration cycle was always the same. Things would go well for a few weeks and then they returned to a life of crime motivated by addiction. Throughout my career, I witnessed the failure of the revolving door style of prosecution of addiction related offenses. People

were continuously being locked up and released. Nobody got better, and the community wasn't safer. Accountability courts address the root issues of addiction. Through such programs, participants can begin a life of recovery and become productive citizens. Society benefits from accountability courts. As a model court, I hope to inspire other courts to start their own accountability court in their jurisdiction. I hope to motivate existing accountability courts to continue to think outside the box and look for new ways to support recovery for their participants."

**What is the coordinator most proud of in terms of the program's success? What does she hope to accomplish as a model court?**

**Mr. Bess:** "The Douglas County DUI/Drug Court is a very special client-centered program that focuses on supporting the participant. I am proud of the change that I see in the participants as they progress through the program. There are a lot of participants who are reluctant to change. Some believe they were just unlucky in getting caught, and others start the program only to reduce their jail time. But then they see that the staff cares about them, and they give treatment and recovery a chance. It is often said that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Seeing someone rebuild their life and helping them set up a strong foundation in recovery and being accountable is satisfying. This program has helped restore relationships, families, and friendships, and I am proud to have been a part of that. I hope to continue to follow best practices as we move our treatment court forward."

**What is something you wish you had known at program inception that you hope to impart to newer courts?**

**Judge Barker:** "Make sure everyone on your team is informed about addiction and recovery and understands that treatment is the engine that runs the program. That always needs to be considered when the team is discussing the progress of any participant. Additionally, make sure your policies and procedures meet NADCP standards. Finally, your program is only as strong as your drug testing procedures are effective."

**Judge Fortner:** "Learn what you can about evidence-based practices that are being used in treatment. Trusting the medical science and experts is great but developing a better understanding of the actual practices and their purpose will elevate the entire program. I have found that judges can support recovery in court exchanges when they have a better understanding of it."

**Anything else you wish to include?**

**Judge Barker:** "Sanctions are a necessary part of any program; however, incentives motivate change in behavior. Do whatever you can to provide your participants with a reason to want to make a change in their lives!"

**Judge Fortner:** "I just encourage anyone running or thinking about starting an accountability court to seek out partnerships in your community. The participants face a lot of challenges in their daily lives that you may not be aware of. Partnerships in areas related to treatment, employment, and housing will prove to be beneficial."

## Council of Accountability Court Judges News

### February 2023 Newsletter Submissions

Please send submissions for the February 2023 newsletter to Debbie Mott ([Debbie.Mott@GeorgiaCourts.gov](mailto:Debbie.Mott@GeorgiaCourts.gov)) by Friday, January 27. If you plan to include a photo where participants can be identified, please be sure to send a signed photo consent with your submission.

### Georgia Accountability Courts Career Opportunities

Please see the Career Opportunities tab (under About Us) on the CACJ website for information about these job postings:

- \*Cherokee Circuit Mental Health Counselor
- \*Clayton County Behavioral Health Clinical Treatment Provider
- \*Cordele Circuit Drug Court Case Manager
- \*DeKalb County Lab Technician
- \*DeKalb County Counselor (Wellness Court)
- \*DeKalb County Clinical Coordinator
- \*DeKalb County Treatment Coordinator (DUI Court)
- \*DeKalb County Misdemeanor Mental Health Court Social Worker
- \*Enotah Circuit Trial Court Administrator
- \*Floyd County Case Manager
- \*Floyd County Drug Court Counselor
- \*Forsyth County Contract Defense Attorney
- \*Forsyth County Accountability Court Case Manager
- \*Forsyth County Contract Counselors
- \*Fulton County Associate Licensed Clinician DUI Court
- \*Fulton County Compliance Coordinator
- \*Fulton County Behavioral Health Clinician II
- \*Glynn County Lead Clinical Director
- \*Griffin Circuit Contract Counselors
- \*Hall County Drug Court Coordinator
- \*Hall County Drug Court Counselor
- \*Henry County Case Manager
- \*Henry County Behavioral Health Clinician
- \*Rockdale County CBI-SA Group Facilitator