



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Fayette County Hosts Family Treatment Court Opening

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LANSING, W.Va. – “Family treatment court provides us the opportunity to change people’s stories and that is very powerful and worth the effort,” Twelfth Circuit Court (Fayette County) Judge Thomas Ewing told a crowd at the opening of the circuit’s Family Treatment Court on Monday. The Fayette County Family Treatment Court is the eleventh family treatment court to open in West Virginia.

Supreme Court Justice John A. Hutchison attended on behalf of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia and told the treatment court team how much the Supreme Court supports their efforts to make these programs successful.

“Family treatment courts are an extension of adult drug courts and juvenile drug courts,” Justice Hutchison said. “They give judges and the community the option to save their own citizens. The Supreme Court supports you, but it’s you all that does the work.” Fayette County Circuit Judge Paul Blake said, “All of us that work in the criminal justice system know this is interconnected: drugs, alcohol, crime, abuse and neglect, delinquency. If we can work together to develop these tools, it will save families and keep them together.”

Last week, Mary Beth Leslie graduated from the Nicholas County Family Treatment Court program. She told the attendees at today’s opening that she went through the program to get her family back, but she gained so much more.

“I was alive but not living (before this program),” Ms. Leslie said. “I am so glad there are people like you all that reach out and embrace us. We are broken and we have our histories and journeys but, when people believe in you and fight for you daily, it turns all that around.”

Family treatment courts are designed to return children to a safer home environment and achieve permanency faster and more effectively than traditional methods. Family treatment courts serve individuals with substance use disorder who are also involved in child abuse and neglect cases. The Supreme Court provides oversight, technical assistance, and training. A State Family Treatment Court Advisory Committee and the Supreme Court Division of Probation Services set criteria for eligibility and participation.

The West Virginia court system continues to add treatment courts throughout the state and to support and celebrate graduates who complete such specialty court programs. The goal of treatment courts is to help participants overcome substance use disorder and mental illness, thus improving the quality of life for them and their families.

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