



# ODCAP Spring Update

OAKLAND DRUG COURT ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS

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## Featured Court: 52-2 District Court (Clarkston)

**By Carol Pummill  
Senior Probation Officer  
52-2 District Court**

The 52-2 District Court began a Sobriety Court Program in November 2004 to reduce recidivism among repeat drunk drivers. Based upon national models of drug and DUI courts, the program offers a highly structured treatment-focused court intervention targeted at individuals with substance abuse problems.

Since the program's inception, 85 people have been admitted to Sobriety Court. The program has graduated 14

participants for successfully completing all program requirements. There are currently 54 active participants. These figures reflect an 80% retention rate, which exceeds national standards.

The program has a recidivism rate of 6.2%, which is well below the national rate for sobriety court graduates of 16%. Even further, program graduates have a re-arrest rate of 0%. The court has also demonstrated a notable reduction in jail use, which saves taxpayer dollars and allows for participants to remain in their homes, jobs, and families.

More telling than the statistics, however, are the participants of the program who work diligently to make lifestyle changes. Perhaps the best way to show the impact of sobriety court is to read the personal story of a program participant. Following is the personal story from a participant who will graduate in May 2007.

The third commencement ceremony will be held **May 16, 2007 at 6:00pm** at the Colombiere Center in Clarkston. If you wish to attend the ceremony, please RSVP to Carol Pummill 248-625-5957 ext.253.

### Special points of interest:

- 6TH CIRCUIT ATC HELD IT'S 16TH COMMENCEMENT PROGRAM ON APRIL 11, 2007.
- NEXT ODCAP MEETING MAY 18, NOON, IN THE 6TH CIRCUIT JUDICIAL CONFERENCE ROOM
- 13TH ANNUAL NADCP CONFERENCE JUNE 13-16, WASHINGTON DC
- 52-2 3RD COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY MAY 16, 6:00 P.M. AT THE COLOMBIERE CENTER IN CLARKSTON.

## The Story of Lori, a 52-2 Sobriety Court Participant

**The following is the personal story of "Lori" a Sobriety Court participant at the 52/2 District Court.**

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My life prior to sobriety court was a total nightmare. I drank at least a fifth of 100 proof vodka and took up to ten 35 milligram adipex every day. It was totally insane. I was strung out. I can't remember even one day of sobriety in the last year or two of my drinking days. I was so depressed and I wanted to die, but for some reason suicide was not an option for me. I figured that

sooner or later I would just have a heart attack or just never wake up, which was alright with me.

I still don't know how I let it get so bad. I have always used drugs and alcohol and seemed to be able to maintain some sort of sanity. At least I had always thought that I maintained some sort of sanity. In the past I had always believed that I was not a drug addict because I never shot up. I know now that I have always been an addict. I was an addict at age thirteen when I smoked my first joint. As a teenager I never thought I was an alco-

holic because I didn't drink in the morning . . . yet.

I thought that I just seemed to have really bad luck or something. I was kicked out of the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program in 1997 because all of the clinical directors at all of the hospitals seemed to hate me. In reality, I was addicted to vicodin and oxycontin which made my behavior crazy. I was totally insane. I was somehow able to get myself off those particular drugs. I had to go in front of the dean to ask to be allowed back into the program. I manipulated,

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## ODCAP Spring Update

### The Story of Lori, a 52-2 Sobriety Court Participant (continued)

"I BELIEVE I WAS NEAR DEATH. I TWITCHED ALL OF THE TIME. I COULD BARELY WRITE MY NAME. I DIDN'T WALK AROUND, I SHUFFLED AROUND. THAT WAY I WOULDN'T STAGGER."

begged and pleaded saying everyone deserves a second chance, after all I only had 8 more months to go. I was allowed back into the program and graduated in 1999.

Pretty much every job I have ever had since I was in my twenties I have been fired from. If I was not fired for being wasted while working I was fired for poor attendance and a horrible attitude, which was a direct result of my alcoholism and drug addiction. Before I was an ultrasound tech, I was a waitress and bartender. I worked at one particular restaurant in Birmingham on and off for about 8 years. They all knew I had a serious problem and that I drank at work. It was one of the times that I had gotten totally drunk and I was driven home that I was "fired." Usually, I would just give my boss a couple of weeks to cool off before I asked for my job back. The last time I had to leave my car at work and be driven home because I had gotten far too drunk was the last time I saw anyone there. I just figured I had embarrassed myself and my managers enough that it was time to close that chapter of my life.

When I started working in hospitals my behavior got a little better for a little while but I was still screwing up. I kept having problems holding long term employment here in Michigan so I started doing temp/travel work all over the country. One time while working in Baltimore I was 4 days away from completing my contract. It seemed that things were finally starting to look

up until I showed up at work at 8 in the morning drunk out of my mind. On my last travel assignment in 2005, I was on call at a hospital in California and got a drunk driving while still on the clock. Needless to say, I was fired again and all because of alcohol.

The physical ramification of my drinking and drugging had certainly taken a toll on me by the Spring of 2005. That was when I got my last drunk driving offense. It had gotten so bad that if I didn't drink I would suffer physically as if I had food poisoning. I believe I was near death. I twitched all of the time. I could barely write my name. I didn't walk around I shuffled around. That way I wouldn't stagger. I was so dehydrated. I would get horrible cramps in my feet and legs. I practically brushed my teeth over the toilet because I would vomit continuously. It's kind of funny, I could not stick a toothbrush in my mouth without vomiting but I had no problem swallowing a handful of pills with vodka. I was disgusting and I didn't care. I was just waiting to die.

I honestly think that one of the worst things is that everyone had lost all trust in me. Even my sister. Nobody believed a word I said and I can't blame them. I lied all of the time. I lied about everything. If I didn't have something to lie about I made up something to lie about. It was just pathetic. I was totally insane. I had actually lost touch of what was real and what was not.

The reality of going to jail was kicking in because I knew

I was going to have to face a judge sooner or later. I was unable to stay sober long enough to pass a PBT. In a moment of sanity I called PACE to see if there was any hope for me. For the first time in my life I was honest. I knew I needed help if I were to sober up even for one day. They got me into a rehab the day after my 37<sup>th</sup> birthday. I spent 14 days there. I should've stayed longer but I thought I was cured. I did drink when I got out. In fact, I drank the morning of my very first session of sobriety court! What a slap of reality that was. I went to jail for 20 days and back to rehab for 7. When I finished that I had been sober for almost 3 weeks. I had never been clean and sober that long. I had quit drinking in the past but I always had my drugs. This time I was not on anything. I would love to say that I felt terrific and clear headed for the first time in years but I can't. I was in agony physically, emotionally and spiritually.

I could not believe how incredibly sick I was. I only got out of bed to go to probation, court and AA. I believe I was going through physical withdrawal from the years of prescription amphetamine abuse. Every night for months, I laid in bed feeling as if my legs and feet were being stung by bees. Other times my entire body itched and I could not scratch it hard enough. I was nauseous and uncomfortable and I wanted to drink so bad I often cried myself to sleep. I can honestly say that part of the reason I did not drink the



## The Story of Lori, a 52-2 Sobriety Court Participant (continued)

first few months of sobriety court was because I was totally and completely broke. Even if I could have come up with a few bucks I didn't have a ride to the liquor store and I was far too sick to walk.

Several months into sobriety court things did start to get a little better. I wasn't completely miserable and I began to look forward to AA and my weekly therapy sessions. I believe that I began to think that I could really pull this court stuff off when I started doing community service at the Alano Club. It got me out of the house and forced me to socialize. It changed my perspective on my life. I grew up surrounded by negativity and was surrounded by it again living with my parents and grandmother. I began to see that not everybody is miserable. What an incredible relief that was for me. People can have fun and not drink or drug. I never believed that was possible. Things were really changing for me at this point.

I am now very near graduating from this life changing thing called sobriety court. When I say life changing I mean it. Sobriety Court was a big factor in getting and keeping me sober. It kept me in line because I didn't want to go to jail. It forced me to go to AA which I would never have done. It forced me to go to therapy which I also would have never done. It made me do community service which landed me at the Alano Club. I can honestly say that sobriety court has by far had the

biggest positive impact on my life. As much as I have hated it and complained about it, I am forever grateful for it. If I would have just been sentenced to go to jail for 1 year I can pretty much guarantee that I would be in the same boat I was in over 18 months ago.

There are certain things I have learned and certain measures I am going to take to maintain my sobriety. One thing I know is that I will never go on diet medication again no matter what. I know where that will lead me. I will be back to being totally wired on diet pills and taking valium and drinking vodka to come down. Been there, done that and got the t-shirt. I don't want any kind of prescription mind altering medication ever. I can never forget that I am an addict.

Most importantly, however, I can never ever consume any sort of alcohol no matter what. I now understand that I am deathly allergic to alcohol. When that toxic substance gets into my blood stream there is no telling what I will do. I think that it would make me go crazy. After 18 plus months of continuous sobriety, the insanity of it all is absolutely terrifying to me. I must always remember that I am an alcoholic and always just one drink away from being drunk again.

I will also continue to go to AA. It helped get me sober and keep me sober. It also taught me that I am not unique and special. There are many people with similar stories.

There are others, who despite a lifetime of negative consequences, continued to be in denial about their alcoholism. They are my friends now and we laugh about the insanity of it all. It is funny to us because all of the insanity we lived with was absolutely normal to us at the time. It was totally normal to slam the first drink before 9 am and to puke it up only to immediately slam another. Total insanity.

There is one thing that is by far the most important factor of my sobriety. It is what got me sober and keeps me sober today. That is GOD and I ask for his help every morning and I thank him every night. I will continue to do this for the rest of my life. The courts brought me to AA and AA brought me to GOD. I have learned what faith is. I don't have to worry about everything every second of every day. It is so freeing. I will never ever forget that one night I prayed for my obsession of alcohol to be taken from me and it was. GOD freed me from the bondage of alcoholism and I will be forever grateful.

I am certain that as long as I continue to do what I have been doing I will be just terrific. Every day is better than the last. My worst day now is nowhere near as horrible as my very best day drinking.

Hopefully, I will be able to find work as an ultrasound tech soon. I'm not too worried about it right now though. I am hoping to get my driver's license back. We'll see. If it is meant to be it will happen.

"I AM CERTAIN THAT AS LONG AS I CONTINUE TO DO WHAT I HAVE BEEN DOING, I WILL BE JUST TERRIFIC. EVERY DAY IS BETTER THAN THE LAST. MY WORST DAY NOW IS NOWHERE NEAR AS HORRIBLE AS MY VERY BEST DAY DRINKING."

## A Look at Female Adult Treatment Court

**By Judge Colleen A. O'Brien  
6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Adult  
Treatment Court Judge**

Only a few months after becoming a Circuit Judge, I became aware of a surprising fact: The vast majority of criminal matters coming into my courtroom involved defendants who were addicted to drugs or alcohol. I came to learn that charges such as retail fraud, embezzlement, identity fraud and uttering and publishing often grow out of histories of substance abuse.

Another unfortunate realization was the failure of our legal system to effectively deal with the realities of addiction and substance abuse. It quickly became clear to me that sentencing offenders to jail or prison, without addressing their underlying substance abuse issues, would most likely lead to recidivism.

I, along with many of my colleagues on the Circuit bench, was frustrated and believed there must be a better way to handle these addiction related cases. When Oakland Circuit Court decided to join the quiet national movement to improve the manner in which the courts were addressing addiction related crimes, by creating an Adult Treatment Court, I welcomed the opportunity to join Judge Joan E. Young and the Adult Treatment Court Team. I have found the experience to be one of the most rewarding of my eight and one half years on the bench.

Since 2003, I have been the Presiding Judge of the Female Adult Treatment Court. Many people have inquired as to

why our Court created gender specific treatment court sessions. Many members of our own bench questioned the need to separate the genders.

The answer to the question is two-fold. First, our treatment court team was of the opinion that the females would be more successful if separated from the males for a variety of reasons including observations made in treatment sessions for the months prior to the decision.

The second reason is that studies had indicated treatment programs designed to be gender specific were associated with higher success rates for women. Those earlier studies were more recently supported.<sup>1</sup>

The Oakland County Adult Treatment Court is one of only a handful of courts which have created a separate court for women. Of approximately 900 adult drug courts currently operating, eleven are gender specific.<sup>2</sup>

Even though a much higher number of men than women are enrolled in drug court programs, women participants are more heavily involved with drugs and a drug life style by the time they became involved in the criminal justice system.<sup>3</sup>

Women have special needs which we have found are more readily addressed in a female only court session. These issues include but are not limited to the following:

- Women drink alcohol and use drugs for different reasons than men.

- Alcohol and drugs have different physiological effects on women than men.
- Many women suffer from low self-esteem.
- Females find treatment related to self-esteem more helpful than men.
- Many women entering the program were responsible for minor children when entering the criminal justice system.
- Female drug court participants face more severe socioeconomic disadvantages than male participants.
- There is greater frequency of co-occurring mental health disorders such as bipolar disorder, major depression and schizophrenia in women.
- Many women have been the victims of domestic violence and physical abuse in the past.
- Many women have been involved in prostitution before becoming involved in the criminal court process.
- Many women were involved in relationships with males involving drugs for economic reasons.

It is not surprising that women might feel more comfortable discussing and revealing these issues in a female only session. It has been our experience that the gender specific setting encourages the participant to feel more at ease and to be more likely to reveal these underlying matters than when male Adult Treatment Court participants are present.

## A Look at Female Adult Treatment Court (continued from page 4)

It is my personal opinion that females are more successful in a gender specific setting for the same reasons that young women have been found to be more successful in an all female classroom setting. Many studies have shown there is less distraction when males are not present and the females are more able to focus on their studies which encourage increased self-esteem.

Whatever the reason may be, we in the Oakland County Adult Treatment Court believe that separating the males and females has been extremely beneficial.

The Oakland County Adult Treatment Court recently had reason to celebrate as a drug free baby was born to one of

our current participants. This is the second drug free baby to be born to one of our participants in the past two years.

Nationwide over 3,500 drug free babies have been born to female drug court participants as a result of their enrollment in drug court programs. This is very significant in light of the fact that cost saving associated with prenatal and birth cost for a baby born drug addicted would be in excess of \$50,000.00 per child.<sup>4</sup>

Adult Treatment Court is a form of therapeutic justice which I am honored to participate in. It is a concept that recognizes law, like medicine, is a healing profession. After eight and half years on the bench it is clear to me that justice means more than

simply locking offenders away. All of society has a stake in the outcome of drug offender crimes.

If we simply lock drug and alcohol offenders away, without ever addressing the underlying cause of their criminal behavior, i.e.: drug addiction, most will return to their former lifestyle. It has also become painfully clear to me that not everyone can or will accept the help offered through the Adult Treatment Court Program.

Despite the disappointments, those male and female participants who leave the program healthy, employed, tax-paying citizens clearly make it all worthwhile. Their success is a benefit to all of society.

<sup>1</sup> *Treatment Approaches for Women United States Department of health and Human services. SAMHSA.2005*

<sup>2</sup> *Information Relevant to female participants in Drug Courts: Summary Overview. BJA Drug Court Clearinghouse Project. February 10, 2007*

<sup>3</sup> *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice and Guiding principles for Women Offenders. National Institute of Corrections. 2003*

<sup>4</sup> *Information Relevant to Female Participants in Drug Courts: Summary Overview BJA Drug court Clearinghouse Project. February 10, 2007*

### OAKLAND COUNTY FAMILY FOCUSED JUVENILE DRUG COURT HOSTS INTERNET PREDATOR SEMINAR

By Corene Munro  
Juvenile Drug Court Coordinator

On March 13, 2007, the Oakland County Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court (FFJDC) program sponsored a presentation by John O'Brien, formerly from the Oakland County Prosecutor's office and currently from the Attorney General's office, and Matthew Roth, Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor, on "Internet Predators: How to Keep Our Children Safe."

Both gentlemen have extensive experience prosecuting Internet sex crimes. All FFJDC parents and team members attended the evening. Information presented was not only practical but very timely. Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Roth offered parents guidelines regarding "My Space" and their children's safety.



# ODCAP Spring Update

OAKLAND DRUG COURT ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS



## About ODCAP . . .

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ODCAP (Oakland Drug Court Association of Professionals) was founded in March 2003 by 6th Circuit Judge Joan Young for the purpose of sharing information and ideas that would benefit all drug courts in Oakland County. It is not mandatory that a court have an operational drug court in order to attend ODCAP meetings. The meetings are open to anyone who is interested in learning about drug court and knowing what the drug courts in Oakland County are doing. The next **ODCAP meeting** will be held on **May 18 at noon** in the 6th Circuit Judicial Conference Room.

## Treatment Providers in Oakland County . . .

Oakland County Health Division's Office of Substance Abuse Services (OSAS) funds and monitors substance abuse treatment and prevention programs throughout Oakland County. For a list of treatment and prevention programs, please go to the following link on the Oakland County Health Division's website:  
[http://www.oakgov.com/health/program\\_service/osas/osas\\_programs.html](http://www.oakgov.com/health/program_service/osas/osas_programs.html)

## A Special "Thanks" to Sobriety Court Attorneys

**By Jennifer Phillips  
Court Administrator  
51st District Court**

It takes the dedication and effort of many players for any sobriety or drug court team to be successful. In the August 2006 issue of the ODCAP update, we heard from Jack Holmes, a sobriety court defense attorney who frequently serves clients in the 51st District Court in Waterford.

In his article, Mr. Holmes stated: "My role as Defense Advisor is a wonderful challenge. I continue to be encouraged by the growing acceptance of the therapeutic court model and the acknowledgment that it is effective in breaking the cycle of addiction

*and criminal behavior. I am delighted for those who succeed and concerned for those who do not. One of the priceless rewards of sitting where I do is to see the differences – physical, emotional, mental - in those who are doing well in this program. I am privileged to be able to witness that."*

In this issue, we would like to take a moment to thank Mr. Holmes and all of the other Sobriety Court attorneys for their tremendous efforts. In addition to Mr. Holmes, the 51st District Court would like to recognize attorneys Colleen Murphy, Daniel Bates, Jeffrey Hollander, Derwood Haines, Loren Allen, Herbert Mick, Joseph Lavigne, Kirsten Nielsen Hartig and Nancy Plas-  
terer.

The 52-1 District Court in Novi appreciates the hard work and dedication of attorneys Mike Bosnic, Derwood Haines and David Wolock.

The 52-2 District Court in Clarkston extends its appreciation to three public defenders who have worked with the Sobriety Court since its inception. Matthew Friedrich, Timothy Flynn and Alan Reiner attended Federal Drug Court training and regularly participate in Sobriety Court meetings, staffing sessions and review hearings. Each attorney demonstrates a strong commitment to the program and to their role as the designated defense counsel for program participants.

The 52-3 District Court in Rochester Hills expresses its gratitude to attorney Jeffrey Cojocar, Public Defender, who volunteered his time to attend the Federal Drug Court training with the team and continues to support the Sobriety Court program with his appearance at review hearings and team meetings. Also, the 52-3 District Court welcomes the addition of Matthew Fedor to the team as the second public defender and looks forward to his contributions.

The defense attorneys are an integral part of any sobriety or drug court team. Thank you to all of the Oakland County attorneys who help make our programs successful.