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### **BORN FREE**

The Oakland County Adult Drug Treatment Court (ATC) is celebrating the birth of its first drug free baby born on August 26, 2005 to a drug court participant, who entered the program in June 2004. The participant has been drug free for 11 months and is expected to graduate from the treatment court in October. The event symbolizes a victory in the fight against drugs and serves as an affirmation of the success that drug courts offer to participants in the program.

The treatment program is a four-phase intervention plan for non-violent, adult felony offenders, who are chemically abusing or dependent. Recognizing that many offenders with substance abuse or dependency problems are engaged in criminal activity because of their abuse or dependency, the ATC works with the offender as an alternative to incarceration. It is a collaborative effort among members of the Oakland County Circuit Court, Prosecutor's Office, Probation Department, defense advisory, Office of Substance Abuse Services (OSAS), and residential treatment provider Community Programs, Inc. (CPI). Together they work to provide clear and specific expectations and goals to break the cycle of drugs and crime and to support participants in achieving total abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

Those eligible and accepted into the program are helped toward recovery through a program of individualized treatment, frequent drug testing, regular appearances before a judge, and close monitoring of their cooperation and progress. Participants are expected to attend at least three NA/AA meetings per week and gain employment or be engaged in community service work. The ATC program is at least 13 months in duration, although the average time a participant spends in the program is 18 months. To date 30 participants have graduated from the Oakland County ATC program, with three more expected to graduate in October. There are presently 32 active participants.

"In addition to medicine and ministry, law has traditionally been considered one of the healing arts. The creation of Drug Treatment Courts signifies the recognition by our legal system of the many social issues and problems arising out of drug addiction," remarked Judge Colleen O'Brien, Presiding Judge of the Adult Treatment Court Women's Session.

Drug courts nationwide have been proven to be effective in the recovery of substance abuse, reducing criminal activity, and helping families to reunite more quickly than those who were not involved in the program.