



St. Mary's County Maryland

Adult Substance Abuse Recovery Court

Volume 3, Newsletter 1

January 2017

Administrative Judge

Hon. Karen H. Abrams

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Circuit Court of St. Mary's
Dept. of Parole & Probation
St. Mary's Public Defender
St. Mary's County Sherrif
St. Mary's States Attorney
Jude House, Inc.

2016 End of Year SARC Program Update

The final months of the calendar year saw the program continue to move forward. As we are now well into our 8th year, our graduation rate continues to grow. On September 13th we had 7 participants graduate. In December we added 2 more graduates. Now that doesn't mean some participants don't continue to struggle. During that same period we had 2 participants discharged unsuccessfully. When we look at our entire time of operation, our graduation rate is now 54%. This is within the national average of 50-57%.

We continue to struggle staying within our "cap" level of 30 participants. During 2016 the average daily population for the program was as high as 34. We always maintain a waiting list and some offenders do have to wait a period of time before they can enter. Sometimes, this is unfortunately in jail. We do attempt to minimize the amount of time an offender, once accepted into the program and has met all their legal obligations, has to wait to enter the program.

With the need to serve a larger eligible population here in St. Mary's County, the Circuit Court, under the direction of Judge Karen H Abrams, approved the application for a grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). It is a 3 year grant totaling \$752,886. If awarded, the grant would support the program's ability to expand to 50 participants along with supporting services.

On November 1st, the Maryland Office of Problem Solving Courts hosted the Annual Adult Drug Court Symposium. This year I was honored to moderate a panel discussion by past drug court graduates from around the state. Also included on the agenda was a session facilitated by Dr. Laurence Westrich, New York University School of Medicine on the Pros and Cons of Medication Assisted Treatment. Chief Judge of the Maryland District Court, John P Morrissey, facilitated a session on Justice System Reforms and the Impact on drug courts and finally Brian L Myers, PhD., LLC, an expert on trauma, spoke on Mistakes Problem Solving Courts Make & How to Fix Them. All of our team members attended.

- Pete Cucinotta, Program Coordinator

SARC Graduation Speech by Paul Miller

“ I came into this program in May 2015. My life was a mess due to my alcoholism. My drinking nearly destroyed my family, my career and almost ended my life. I had been arrested 7 times in 3 months, was removed from my family, lost my job and nearly died in a car accident. All due to my alcoholism.

I knew I needed help but my addiction caused me to fight the help being offered. The team placed the “SCRAM” bracelet on me and placed me into Stepping Stone sober living. 1 month into the program I had my first relapse. I managed to remain sober for 5 months after that but it was still a struggle and I was still fighting the help offered. I had my 2nd relapse in late 2015.



I was caught drinking during a home visit by Pete. It turned out to be a blessing. Although it didn't feel like it at the time. With so much to lose, I had chosen to drink again. I had hit my bottom. I had court 3 days later after the home visit and was fully expecting to spend Christmas in jail. But I didn't. Pete had told me that if I truly wanted help the Team would get me the help I need rather than lock me up. I accepted their help and Pete kept his word. I stopped fighting that day. That day my feelings toward the program and the Team changed. I now felt the Team truly cared. It is tough love but that is just what I needed.

Today, through the help of drug court and AA my life is better than I imagined it could ever be a year ago. I am back home with my wife and daughters, I have a wonderful job and we are financially stable. On December 19th, I will celebrate my 1 year of sobriety. I want to thank the Team for not giving up on me and for providing the help I needed. I am grateful. ”

Paul Miller
2016 SARC Graduate

Finding The Way - Recovery Phase Tokens



SARC Graduation Speech by Kimberly Smith

“ I’m blessed to have the opportunity to be here today to speak to you about my time in drug court. God gave me the understanding and will to make it thru drug court by being honest with myself and knowing I had to get my two children back. I learned early I needed a network for support to keep me on track and become a stronger person.

During my time in this program I have had to navigate social services, Pathways, Tri-co, Beacon, crisis, On Our Own, support meetings and treatment. This was not easy because I was also working. So I’m telling you guys this to let you know it was in fact very very hard, but I know you can do it too.



Now I have my children back temporary on a trial basis. I still have a job and understand how you guys feel about working, going to classes and whatever is on your to do list, but I’m telling you drug court works if you work with the program and I have been blessed to get my children back and have a home.

I like to thank Jude House for being understanding and supportive by letting my children come to class when I got temporary custody. I will continue to go to support meetings and stay in touch with my sponsor. ”

Kimberly Smith
2016 SARC Graduate

Thanks To Our 2016 Donors

- ADF Community Outreach Foundation
- Frank and Susan Taylor
- Friends of John F Wood
- Guy, Distributing , Inc.
- John Parlett - CMI General Contractors
- Mark and Amy Henderson
- Michael West
- Rotary Club of St. Mary’s - Leonardtown

Advisory Board Thoughts by Frank Taylor

I have had the opportunity to be associated with the Advisory Board for the St. Mary's County Adult Recovery Court for the past few years. Recently I was asked if I would share my thoughts and impressions as to the impact this initiative has made on both the individuals who have participated and the community in which it serves. My understanding from the statistics of similar programs in other states and jurisdictions is that there has been a positive impact made on the criminal and judicial systems which participate in some form of alternative sentencing such as a Recovery Court. The rising cost of incarceration coupled with the reality of offenders repeating the same patterns shortly after their release have placed a strain on the budgets for the various departments of corrections. There has to be another way to address this issue of a "revolving door" situation relating to drug and alcohol arrests and convictions.

Through the excellent work of those involved with the Adult Recovery Court, a positive impact has been made on the lives of many participants. From the Judge and the attorneys to the counselors and all staff members, good work is underway to change and make better the future of those who are willing to put forth the effort to go through the program and see it to the end and graduation. It's not easy and it requires a commitment on the part of the participant to want to make a change in their life. As there is in life, sometimes there are setbacks along the way. The one message which has become a constant is that the participant is not alone in their journey and there is a support system in place to help. But the bottom line is that it takes the determination of the participant to want to make a positive change in their life.

Of all the facets of the program perhaps the most moving is the graduation of the participant. I have been fortunate to witness the individual testimony of many graduates. The most powerful message is the one delivered by the graduate who describes where their life was leading them and how, through the help of the Adult Recovery Court program, they were able to turn themselves around and begin the path back to becoming a productive and responsible individual. Although you can see and hear through their testimony the restored sense of self respect and self worth, there is one other part of the graduation which cannot go unnoticed by the observer. The look of pride and support from the smiling faces of those family members and friends in attendance is equally moving. In some cases families have been restored with a renewed sense of having a spouse or perhaps, a mother, father, brother or sister back within their family unit. Some had given up hope that their family would ever be whole again.

In closing, I would like to thank all those who work to make the Adult Recovery Court a success. It has made a tremendous impact not only on the lives of those who have participated and are participating, but on the community as well. I would also encourage those who have graduated to return the favor and become involved with the alumni group and offer support to those who are currently in the program and beyond. It is through helping others and making a positive contribution to our society that we gain a feeling of belonging and satisfaction. Thank you and all the best for 2017.