



# St. Mary's County Maryland

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## Adult Substance Abuse Recovery Court

Volume 1, Number 2

August 15, 2015

### Administrative Judge

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Hon. Karen H. Abrams

### Program Coordinator

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Pete Cucinotta

### Advisory Board

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Cynthia L. Jones

Anne H. Marum

Thomas F. McKay

John K. Parlett, Jr.

Frank E. Taylor

Lorri K. Werrell

Michael P. West

Del. John F. Wood, Jr. (ret)

M. Brewster, M.D. (Ex Officio)

### Team Members

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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  
Step N 2 Recovery

## National Drug Court Month

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May was National Drug Court Month. We celebrated with several events. On May 5th the team, and several advisory board members appeared before the Commissioners of St. Mary's County for the Commissioners to present a Proclamation recognizing this month as such. Then on the 19th a graduation was held where three participants successfully completed the program. State Delegate Deb Rey presented a state proclamation recognizing May as National Drug Court Month. Board member Cindy Jones entertained those in attendance by singing several songs. The food was provided by Thomas F McKay. Then to cap the month off the Leonardtown Rotary Club presented the program with a \$150 grant at their monthly meeting.

## SARC Team Training

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In 2012, the program became a "hybrid" drug court that include a number of repeat DUI offenders. These participants receive specific targeted treatment and strategies to address their issues of alcohol abuse and driving. We receive funding from the Motor Vehicle Administration to support this effort. In April, most of the team members traveled to Virginia Beach to participate in DWI Court Regional Training presented by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Center for DWI Courts. During this day long training, presentations and discussions were held on DWI Court Best Practices & Latest Research, Changing Behaviors, Gender Specific Issues and Judicial Leadership to name a few.

In May, several members of the team were able to attend the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) 21st Annual Training Conference at National Harbor. The training included twenty-two different tracks over three days. The tracks included sessions on incentives and sanctions, DWI courts, science and technology, trauma, taking your program to the next level, advanced issues in drug and alcohol treatment and legal and ethical issues in problem-solving courts to name but a few.

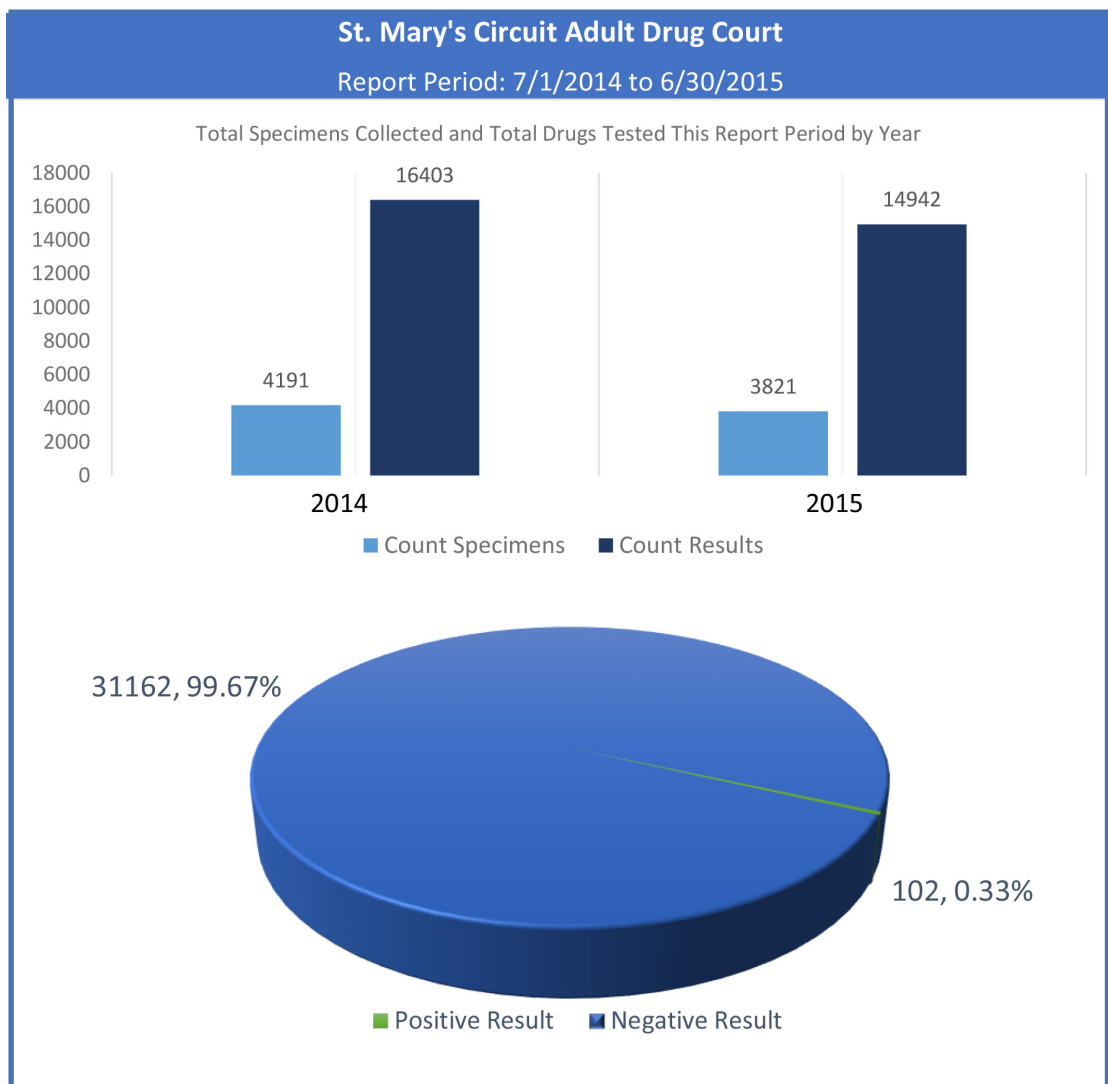
Both these trainings offer the staff the knowledge that provides the basis for implementing and managing the components that make our program the most successful type of programming for repeat offenders with substance abuse issues operational in America today.

# Monitoring Program Compliance

One of the ways the program monitors each participant's compliance with remaining drug and alcohol free is through a protocol of regular testing. Unlike substance abuse treatment programs alone who generally rely on their clients self-report and limited testing, the Adult Recovery Court "best practices" supports a testing protocol that will demonstrate efficacy in lowering drug and alcohol use.

The graphs below reflect the monitoring that was done for the period of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. During this one year period, there were 8,012 individual samples collected. Those samples totaled 31,345 individual drug tests. As the results show, less than 1% of all tests were positive.

If you were to look at the average drug and alcohol use of each person prior to entering the program, the reduction or in most cases elimination of drug and alcohol use is clearly demonstrated.



## Advisory Board Thoughts: John Parlett

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Life offers us many opportunities to interact with others and involve ourselves in causes that are worthwhile and beneficial to our community. I have had the privilege in my lifetime to be associated with numerous community based organizations and boards that have truly had a positive impact. My service on the St. Mary's County Adult Substance Abuse Recovery Court Advisory Board clearly rises to the top of my list of organizations that have a meaningful impact on those involved.

But by the grace of God, anyone of us could find ourselves, or a loved one, with problems of drug and alcohol abuse. It is far too common in our society today, and by most measures is at epidemic levels. Our legal system typically treats these non-violent offenders much like every other criminal matter, where, "if you do the crime, you do the time". This may not always be the best approach. Substance Abuse Recovery Court provides an alternative to "doing the time" in a much more productive and life changing way, for those accepted into the program and continue to its completion by graduating from the program.

I have witnessed this transformation multiple times in my three years on the Advisory Board. A number of graduates have testified that the program saved literally their lives, and they are quite serious about that claim. I have watched individuals go from the deepest low of their lives, to a life with a bright future and significant promise. It requires them to take responsibility for their actions and to commit themselves to becoming a better person.

This program works, and it works well. It changes lives for the better, and is far more cost effective than jail time. I am proud to be but a small part of it, and encourage everyone to become more familiar with the program because it could be anyone of us facing the problem of drug and alcohol abuse.



*County Commissioners Proclamation*

## New SARC Member

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Since the last newsletter we have welcomed a new "team" member. Sean Moran, an attorney with the Office of the Public Defender. Sean is an experienced lawyer who has in the past sat in with the team on a few occasions. We are very happy to have him as the permanent defense counsel representative for the participants once they enter the program.

# Recovery Court Building Alumni Group

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*Brian Ohler - Recent SARC Graduate*

Brian Ohler (pictured above) successfully graduated from the Adult Recovery Court on May 19th, 2015. He had recently been interviewed by the local media for an article where he was quoted as saying “he was a self-described alcoholic for 40 years”. Though he had quit drinking in the past, back to back deaths of his girlfriend and ex-wife triggered him to drink again. He entered the program after receiving his 4th DUI.

For nearly a year he adhered to the regimen set out by the program. This included up to three drug and alcohol tests per week, regular treatment attendance and status hearings to review his progress and meeting with his case manager and probation agent. He was also required to wear an alcohol detection bracelet around his ankle for designated periods. Through hundreds of tests, he was able to maintain his sobriety.

To compound his struggle with alcoholism, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy while in the program. As of this time, his cancer remains in remission, but continues to be tested periodically.

Brian, still attends peer support groups in the community like AA and he will have 18 months sobriety in September. During his time in Recovery Court, he was able to re-engage with his family and now spends much of his time working on a ‘hot rod’ which he enjoys immensely.

## Finding The Way - Recovery Phase Tokens

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