

Franklin County Municipal Court



PRESS RELEASE
September 10, 2024

Celebrating New Beginnings for Human Trafficking Victims

Thirteen women who exited a life of sex work and human trafficking have found recovery and will graduate from a Franklin County Municipal Court program Thursday that offers a chance for a new beginning.

The restorative justice support program is offered through CATCH Court, which stands for Creating Autonomy Through Collaborative Healing, and is one of five specialty dockets provided through the Municipal Court.

These graduates will be honored and receive a diploma at the Ohio Statehouse on Sept. 12, 2024, at 11 a.m. in the rotunda.

Recovery from sexual exploitation is challenging because it is compounded by secrecy, shame, and silence that often accompanies this type of trauma.

"It is important to recognize that the trauma these women incur happens in isolation. We know that their healing only happens in a community. The CATCH Program strives to provide them with the safe community they need to recover. The most influential thing we can offer survivors is hope, belief in themselves, and unconditional positive regard along the way as we journey with them," CATCH Court's Presiding Judge Jodi L. Thomas said.

The Municipal Court started the program in 2009. It provides holistic support for women, including housing, therapy, and transportation, as well as individualized assistance, such as help getting driver's licenses reinstated and workforce development. The participants also work with a probation officer assigned exclusively to CATCH Court and meet with the judge weekly.

Services offered through the court program are provided by certified providers who have a proven track record of success in helping women recover. For example, Freedom a la Carte, provides participants access to vital resources such as education, workforce development, and mentorship, as well as facilitating an aftercare program.

Freedom a la Carte's Chief Executive Officer Paula Haines will be the graduation's guest speaker. Rose Daniles, a 2018 CATCH Court Graduate, will also offer words of encouragement to the new graduates.

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CATCH Court participants have suffered physical and or mental trauma in the past, with more than 84% of the women also having been victims of sexual or intimate partner abuse.

The program's structured approach, which also teaches decision-making to help women decipher signs of healthy and unhealthy behavior, has a proven success rate, with less than one in four women recidivating.

It is certified by the Supreme Court of Ohio, and provides services to the Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

The graduation ceremonies serve as powerful reminders of the transformative impact of these programs.

The Franklin County Municipal Court, the largest and busiest court in the state, has five specialty dockets. In addition to CATCH Court, the other specialty dockets assist those with mental health issues, non-opiate drug or alcohol addiction, opiate addiction, and military veterans. These initiatives demonstrate the court's unwavering commitment to providing second chances, promoting long-term recovery, and reducing recidivism.

Anyone wanting more information on the CATCH program can email CATCHCourt@franklincountymunicourt.org.

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