

Franklin County Municipal Court



PRESS RELEASE

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Franklin County Municipal Court Offers Hope and Transformation for Individuals Struggling with Addiction and Mental Health Challenges

The Franklin County Municipal Court is leading the way in providing life-changing opportunities for individuals battling substance use disorders and mental health issues by offering a supportive and transformative path to recovery that empowers participants to rebuild their lives and achieve lasting change.

This week, the court celebrates the graduation of 21 remarkable individuals who have completed the intensive two-year programs and were celebrated by those judges who offered a second chance.

Nine graduates completed the MAVS (Military & Veteran Services) program, which works with veterans whose addictions or mental health issues have brought them to the court, and 12 graduates completed h.a.r.t. (Helping Achieve Recovery Together), which is a tailored program for those battling opiate addiction.

The programs provide individualized treatment plans that address the complex challenges faced by participants, including trauma, drug addiction, and mental health issues. Participants also get assistance with housing, transportation, work, and navigating basic life skills.

The graduation ceremonies serve as powerful reminders of these programs' transformative impact. MAVS hosted its graduation on May 20 at the 373 S. High Street county complex auditorium, with help from previous MAVS graduates who welcomed them into a supportive and understanding community that assists fellow alumni long after the program is complete.

Franklin County Municipal Judge Jarrod B. Skinner said one of the most significant rewards of presiding over the MAVS court is seeing the metamorphosis of overcoming bad decisions and actively fighting for recovery.

"We can see when something has clicked. They know they have the support they need for recovery and are making changes. It's pretty rewarding," Judge Skinner said.

MAVS now has 124 graduates since its inception in 2014. Graduates include men and women, combat and noncombat veterans, and some who are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

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The h.a.r.t. graduation was held yesterday at the Linden Community Center in a room packed with staff from treatment centers, social service agencies, and family who were there to celebrate this life-altering milestone.

In addition to graduating, many h.a.r.t. graduates were given challenge coins acknowledging their years of sobriety.

Presiding Judge Jodi Thomas continually evolves the program by adding services that can be used as tools for a lasting recovery.

Some recently added services are a trauma-informed yoga class to provide coping skills, a financial literacy class to help them maintain fiscal independence, and guidance from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities to help with job interviews and workplace etiquette.

“This program loves them until they learn to love themselves,” Judge Thomas said. “Participants often ask how they can be successful. We tell them that if they follow the acronym HOW (honest, open, and willing), which means they are honest, open to feedback and suggestions, and willing to do the work, they will set themselves up for a lifetime of recovery.”

Specialty courts are increasing across the county, with Ohio leading the way. Ohio's ranks second in the nation for the number of drug courts and tied for fourth with Indiana in the number of veterans' courts.

The MAVS program is actively seeking veterans to serve as mentors, with both paid and volunteer positions available for those who wish to make a difference in the lives of participants.

Beyond MAVS and h.a.r.t., the Franklin County Municipal Court offers a range of specialized programs targeting specific challenges, such as mental health issues, non-opiate drug or alcohol addiction, and the exploitation of women in the sex industry. These initiatives demonstrate the court's unwavering commitment to providing second chances, supporting individual transformation, and promoting long-term recovery.

Pictures from both graduations [are available here](#).

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