

2020 Year-End Review

The Alumni Association of the Morris County Drug Court Court (AAMCDC) takes their responsibility to the Drug Court Program and its participants seriously and have been working hard to provide support during this difficult year.

Due to the pandemic, our monthly meetings were held on the Zoom platform. As part of our mentoring efforts, we reach out to the community for subject matter experts to present topics relevant to Drug Court participants and graduates. For example, in November, Kenneth Albiston, LCSW, gave a presentation on “Mental Health During COVID-19”. At our December meeting, Patricia Kazanowski-Nowicki BA, CADC, Ph.D. Student, Director of Operations, Excel Treatment Center/The Milestone House discussed “Substance Use Disorder and Recovery During the Holidays.”

Because of the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided cell phones and phone calling cards for Drug Court participants. These resources were needed as a virtual process for managing activities that were previously conducted in person. Participants were being released from inpatient treatment facilities and correction facilities who needed a great deal of support. Phone contacts with probation officers, treatment providers, support groups, and sponsors helped people cope with the stresses of these challenging times, which will help them remain strong in their recovery. Thanks to a generous donation from an Alumni board member, we were able to purchase 12 Tracphones with 300 minutes for 30 days.

In April, Pomodoro Ristorante and Chef Fredy’s Table donated generous boxes of food that were distributed by members of the AAMCDC and Drug Court Probation Officers to Drug Court participants, residents in sober houses, and others suffering from food insecurity.

We had two Essay and Art Competitions in 2020. In May, the essay topic was suggested by Gail Buck, Substance Abuse Evaluator, Morris County Drug Court: “Describe how social distancing does not represent isolation.” The essay exercise was prepared by Dr. Rebecca Convisor, founder of the Creative Positive Expression Program. Prizes totaling \$600.00 were gift cards for food donated by Costco in Wharton and an anonymous donor. Anyone who submitted an entry was given an Alumni Association of the Morris County Drug Court ink pen donated by EmbroidMe in Morristown. In October, the essay topic was suggested by Ariadne Wallace, Senior Probation Officer, Morris County Drug Court: “Raising Awareness Around Discrimination” It was prepared by Dr. Eulena Horne, Coordinator of the Creative Positive Expression Program.

All prizes were grocery store gift cards totaling \$600, donated by Morristown Rotary. Anyone who submitted an entry was given an AAMCDC ink pen.

We express our sincere gratitude to the Creative Positive Expression Program (CPEP) which produces "In Our Shoes." Under the exemplary leadership of Dr. Eulena Horne and her team, we consistently produce a high-quality magazine. The COVID-19 crisis has not deterred them from their calling. Their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm for supporting people recovering from substance use disorder is greatly appreciated. The CPEP team continues to be dedicated to helping drug court participants express themselves and gain insights into their decisions through writing and art assignments

To better meet the needs of current participants and graduates, we conducted a Wellness Survey on Survey Monkey. This valuable survey will help the Alumni Association determine priorities and make important decisions regarding their needs. The results are being analyzed and will be available for our January meeting.

We also applied for a grant from the Investors Foundation and other funding sources. If awarded, the funds will be used to support the Operation Nourish (ON) program. The program will be implemented to provide essential needs for drug court participants and alumni who are unemployed or furloughed, resulting from the closure of many businesses due to the Covid-19 crisis. As of December 31st, 2020, we are still waiting for a decision.

The annual AAMCDC picnic scheduled for July 13th was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event will be rescheduled for 2021. The event was to include a BBQ Cook-Off and Softball Tournament to include Passaic, Sussex, and Union County Drug Courts.

Since August, we have been able to provide participants with clothing, footwear, and apparel, thanks to monthly donations from Vans, an apparel company.

A total of eight Drug Court Participants have been referred to the Accountability Panel for noncompliance. Six from Morris County Drug Court and two from Sussex County Drug Court. The participant's issues were addressed on the Zoom platform.

Board Member Darby Davidson provided free assistance to complete financial aid applications for college and career school to participants and graduates. Board Members Darby Davidson and Chuck Femminella, members of the Fundraising Committee, investigated safe and effective ways to continue their efforts during the pandemic.

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