



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SUPERIOR COURT OF FORSYTH COUNTY HOLDS
FIRST C.A.R.E. COURT GRADUATION**

Forsyth County, Georgia – On May 6, five county residents became the first graduates of the Superior Court of Forsyth County’s Mental Health CARE (Change, Assist, Restore and Enlighten) Court. The graduation ceremony, which was held in the Forsyth County Courthouse, concluded more than two years of intensive supervision and treatment for the participants, who suffer from severe and persistent mental illness.

Grant funding was secured in 2013 to provide for the planning phase of the Mental Health C.A.R.E. Court, and the program was launched in March 2014. Presided over by Judge Leslie Abernathy-Maddox, it is designed to provide alternatives to incarcerations for individuals who have been identified with severe and persistent mental health diagnoses by linking those individuals to local, community-based treatment resources with the goal of improving public safety and helping prevent further involvement in the criminal justice system.

“The C.A.R.E. Court holds the enrollees accountable and assists them in achieving long-term stability so they can be successful members of the community and law-abiding citizens,” said Judge Abernathy-Maddox. “This program is an asset not only to those who have become our first graduates but also to the entire county by working to make our community safer and keeping these individuals out of jail.”

The C.A.R.E. Court is supported by the offices of the Forsyth County District Attorney and Solicitor-General, as well as by local defense attorneys, law enforcement and treatment professionals.

Prior to mental health courts, the mentally ill were treated the same as other offenders – they were tried in regular court and incarcerated in jail and prisons. They would complete their time of incarceration and return to their communities only to face the same issues as a result of their illness.

Georgia is home to more than 125 accountability courts. Such courts include adult and juvenile drug courts, DUI courts, adult and juvenile mental health courts and veteran courts. The number of courts have grown significantly in the past several years due to support from the judiciary, legislature and governor. In addition to the Mental Health C.A.R.E. Court, Forsyth County also offers State Court Drug Court, DUI Court and Superior Court Drug Court programs.

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