



Family Treatment Court Celebrates Graduates, 10-Year Anniversary By Thai Phi Le

Six women donned caps and gowns, gripping white roses as they walked in rhythm with the music, one behind the other in the processional. It was just a few steps to the front of the Jurors' Lounge at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, but they were important ones in their journey to sobriety. On June 7, these six mothers graduated from the Family Treatment Court (FTC) Program.

The recognition ceremony also was a celebration of the program's 10th anniversary. Since its launch in 2003, more than 200 participants have come through the Family Treatment Court, and 140 have graduated. The court-supervised program offers residential substance abuse treatment to mothers or female guardians involved in child neglect cases.

Judge Rufus King, who served as chief judge of the D.C. Superior Court when the program was proposed, read aloud the graduates' own testimonials about the program. "FTC believed in us when we did not believe in ourselves," wrote one graduate. "Thanks, Family Treatment Court, for helping me make a change, and for sticking with me until I got it right," another wrote.

"That's powerful stuff," Judge King said. "You're wearing caps and gowns today, which is typical of college graduation. What you did was much harder than that ... No one can take that from you."

Some of the program's previous graduates attended the ceremony, speaking about life after FTC. Ten years clean. Three years sober. Two years drug-free. "It took time to realize this was an intervention to save my life," said Carla Evans, a 2005 graduate who now works at the U.S. Department of Commerce and is pursuing her master's degree in mental health counseling. "I stand before you today a totally different person."—*T.L.*