

For Immediate Release

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American Judges Association Endorses DWI Courts Urges States to Implement DWI Court Programs to Reduce DWI Recidivism

Alexandria, VA (April 19, 2011) - The American Judges Association (AJA) is the latest national organization to officially support DWI Courts as an effective means of reducing recidivism among the nation's most dangerous drunk drivers.

Hardcore drunk drivers are drivers with a BAC of .15 and above and/or a prior conviction for impaired driving. They are the most dangerous drivers on our roads and are statistically overrepresented in fatal crashes. In 2009, greater than 70% of all alcohol related fatalities, 7,607, involved a hardcore offender. Throughout the country there are 2 million people with three or more DWI convictions and a staggering 400,000 with five or more.

"The repeat impaired driver is not impacted by the same general deterrence methods as other offenders," said Judge Mary Celeste, the organization's President. "Given the pervasive problem of impaired driving and the national threat to public safety it represents, it is critical that AJA supports programs that have proven truly effective at reducing recidivism. DWI Courts hold DWI offenders strictly accountable while giving them the treatment they need to permanently change their behavior. This is the most effective tool we have to handle repeat DWI drunk drivers."

DWI Courts are designed specifically to address hardcore DWI offenders and the dependence on alcohol that keeps them from changing their behavior. Participants in DWI Court are regularly and randomly tested for alcohol use and required to appear weekly before a judge to ensure they are living up to their obligations. In addition to strict accountability, they also receive long-term, rigorous treatment and close community supervision.

"Judges are of critical importance in DWI Court and the National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC) is thrilled to have the support of the AJA," said NCDC Director David Wallace. "It is the responsibility of the courts to ensure that our most dangerous drunk drivers are held accountable for their actions, treated for their addiction and are never arrested for impaired driving again."

According to a 2008 study by the Michigan Supreme Court, DWI court participants are nineteen times less likely to be re-arrested for a DWI charge than those who have been through traditional sentencing. The study also found that DWI Courts saved the criminal

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justice system time and money by getting the impaired driver into the program quicker and using sanctions, such as jail, more strategically.

Last month the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a study concluding that repeat DWI offenders graduating from DWI Courts in three Georgia counties were up to 65% less likely to be re-arrested for a new DWI offense than similar DWI offenders sentenced in a traditional court.

Now numbering over 525, DWI Courts have become a proven model for getting the most dangerous drunk drivers off the roads. Several states, such as Michigan, Missouri, and Texas, are now calling for the expansion of DWI Courts as a public safety and budget solution. As DWI Courts are launched throughout the country, NCDC provides training and disseminates research to the personnel needed to operate them.

“We know that a conviction, unaccompanied by accountability and treatment, especially in the case of hardcore drunk drivers, is an ineffectual deterrent for the repeat offender,” added David Wallace. “But we know that DWI Courts are highly effective for this population. The National Center for DWI Courts is committed to expanding DWI Courts to serve every hardcore drunk driver on the road today. The endorsement of the AJA is critical in building a coalition of criminal justice professionals, law enforcement professionals, and treatment professionals united to this end.”

About the NCDC:

The National Center for DWI Courts (NCDC), a professional services division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), is the only dedicated advocacy, policy, training and technical support organization for DWI Courts in the nation.

Dedicated to delivering research-driven practices to reduce impaired driving recidivism nationwide, the NCDC is designed to:

- Expand DWI Courts nationwide
- Improve DWI Court operations through training and technical assistance
- Maintain operational standards for DWI Courts

Established in June of 2007, through a partnership with [Beam Global Spirits and Wine](#), the NCDC works toward eliminating the hardcore impaired driver through the expansion of DWI Courts nationwide. The NCDC is now bringing DWI Courts to the forefront of the repeat impaired driving problem. It is through that effort and the expansion of DWI Courts that NCDC's message of "Making Your Community a Safer Place" is coming true.

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The NCDC is supported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation; Beam Global Spirits & Wine; the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America; and The Century Council.

About AJA

The objective and purpose of the Association is: to promote and improve the effective administration of justice; to maintain the status and independence of the judiciary; to provide a forum for the continuing education of its members and the general public; and for the exchange of new ideas among all judges.

The American Judges Association was originally founded as the National Association of Municipal Judges (NAMJ) in 1959 at Colorado Springs, Colorado, by 30 municipal court judges. As the association's membership grew to include judges from other types of courts and from a wider geographical area, its name was changed to the American Judges Association in 1973. Currently, AJA has a membership exceeding 3,000 members, which includes both present and former judges of courts of all jurisdictions in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa and The Virgin Islands. Its Board of Governors is composed of representatives from fourteen districts.

The AJA's impact on judicial education has been effective in a number of ways. In 1970, the Association cooperated with the American Judicature Society in organizing the American Academy of Judicial Education, the first such institute to sponsor formal, in-residence training programs for judges of courts of first jurisdiction. AJA has sponsored more than 30 annual conferences, bringing together leading jurists, legal scholars and law enforcement officers to discuss matters of importance affecting the judiciary.

With almost fifty years of service and commitment to the judiciary, AJA continues to exemplify excellence in judicial education.