

On November 15, 2018, the Drug Addiction Reduction Team (DART) Court held its first graduation 2 years after the programs' inception. The Honorable Maggie Ross welcomed graduates, colleagues, community members, families and friends in the gallery to the ceremony. Prosecutors and defense counsel congratulated the 3 graduates not only on their program successes but in achieving long term recovery. All 3 graduates experienced struggles including but not limited to homelessness and relapse. Judge Ross gave each graduate praise as well as shared stories she remembered about each of them during their time in the DART program.

Emerson Ouk was the first graduate to be recognized at the ceremony. Judge Ross reflected on how Emerson did not have a straight and narrow path at the beginning of the program. With positive reinforcement he was able to change his path and achieve sobriety. Emerson said he would not have been able to achieve recovery without the support of his girlfriend and the self-motivation to be a good father to his daughter. The entire gallery laughed when Emerson thanked the prosecutor for doubting his success because he proved him wrong. The prosecutor congratulated Emerson and expressed how he was happy that he proved him wrong. Emerson achieved much during his two years in the program, including: developing a relationship with his daughter, obtaining stable housing, and obtaining employment.

Judge Ross referred to one graduate as being broken when she was admitted into the program. Janene Logue was admitted to the DART program immediately after her parental rights were terminated in Superior Court. Janene was homeless, had no source of income, and struggled with her addiction. Judge Ross reasoned with Janene at admission to DART that she understood Janene's significant loss and hardships, but she was not ready to give up on Janene. Two years later, Janene is a Certified Recovery Specialist, teaches art classes at Recovery Café, has achieved over a year and a half of sobriety, and plays on a recovery softball team. The entire gallery was touched when Janene spoke at graduation and thanked Judge Ross for treating her like a human being.

The third graduate was Tristan Schreckengost. Tristan is the youngest of the three graduates and the team joked with him about his young disposition. Tristan achieved program success with the guidance of his probation officer. During his time in DART, Tristan obtained stable housing, achieved recovery, and reflected upon his time in DART. Tristan expressed that without the program, he would not have been directed to the services he needed. Tristan thanked the team for holding him accountable for his actions and thanked Judge Ross for all her support during his time in the program.

Not one graduate had a straight path to recovery without difficulties but with the support of their friends, family, treatment providers, probation and the Court they were able to overcome their barriers and sustain recovery. The DART team looks forward to continuing to support all the DART participants as they break down their barriers by providing access to tools and resources to help them achieve long term recovery.