

Taylor Honored by State Drug Court Association

Contact:

Kevin Batts

23rd District Drug Court Coordinator

615-306-6229

The Tennessee Association of Drug Court Professionals honored 23rd Judicial District Assistant Public Defender Richard Taylor, Jr. with the prestigious Christy Vernon Spirit Award. Taylor was presented the award during opening ceremonies of the association's annual conference in Murfreesboro. Tennessee Drug Courts provide a holistic approach to combating drug and alcohol addiction by incorporating long-term treatment into the traditional judicial process.

Members of the Drug Court association choose the recipient of the Christy Vernon Spirit Award in recognition of his or her service to drug courts. Christy Vernon was a program manager for the Office of Criminal Justice Programs who tragically lost her life in a traffic accident. Vernon's exuberant attitude for the advancement of drug courts in Tennessee lives on through the award named in her honor.

Taylor was presented the award by Circuit Judge Robert Burch, who also serves as the Drug Court Judge for the 23rd Judicial District.

Taylor has a long, distinguished association with the 23rd Judicial District drug Court, which serves the citizens of Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart Counties. The attorney has played an active role in the management of the Drug Court since its creation.

Taylor's nomination for the award included, "Mr. Taylor is an innovator for Drug Courts. From his early visions for self-sufficient Drug Court Sober Living Residences to his official visits to Congress to lobby for increased funding for Drug Courts all across America, Mr. Taylor has demonstrated his commitment for the advancement of Drug Courts. Mr. Taylor has been willing to try new things to grow Drug Courts in both quantity and quality. The Drug Courts in Davidson County and the 23rd District stand as testaments to his untiring resolve to improve the system. Mr. Taylor is the past President, Vice President, and current Secretary of the Tennessee Association of Drug Court Professionals, and has served on the Board for many years."

Taylor has served in a volunteer capacity for Drug Courts for more than a decade. He has had a long, distinguished career in public service, serving many years as an Assistant Public Defender. He regularly donates his time to providing pro bono legal services to the less fortunate. He spends many hours working on and around the 23rd District's Sober Living Residences to make them feel more like "home" for the participants. Taylor is active in a number of other community service and church-related activities.

Judge Burch adds that Taylor is well-known in the community and has the proven ability to make things happen. "He has developed a strong working relationship with treatment facilities across the state, and his knowledge of treatment models provides invaluable insight to our Drug Court team in selecting treatment options for participants. He is admired by participants and is

quick to strike up a conversation with anyone in the courtroom. This puts participants at ease, and promotes an open dialogue between participants and team members. He can often be heard in a corner of the courtroom giving an inspirational talk to someone after court. Participants and strangers alike gather around to hear his comforting words of wisdom on their road to recovery.”

As an Officer of the Tennessee Association of Drug Court Professionals, Taylor has developed strong ties to leaders in Washington who are making a difference for Drug Courts in this country. He actively lobbies members of Congress, taking time to educate them on the intricate details of effectively managing Drug Courts. Judge Burch notes, “He willingly shares his own experiences of building Drug Courts with other Drug Court managers and state officials. He selflessly shares documents, ideas, and methods with anyone who asks. Mr. Taylor is a voracious student of Drug Court Management techniques, and is always looking for innovations that might be adapted for use in Tennessee Drug Courts. Mr. Taylor is always looking to take Drug Courts to the next level. He advocates for more consistent funding for Drug Courts. He strives for the dream of making Drug Courts accessible to every American in need. He is a strong advocate for guiding principles which bring consistency and accountability to the operation of Drug Courts.”

Media Contacts:

The Digital photo from this Press Release is available upon request to KB0713@comcast.net