

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COURT CELEBRATING GRADUATION ON
APRIL 25, 2017**

The Indian River County Mental Health Court and Veteran's Court will hold its third graduation on **Tuesday, April 25, 2017 at 2:15 p.m.** in Courtroom 4 of the Indian River County Courthouse in downtown Vero Beach with 4 Veteran's Court and 9 Mental Health Court graduates.

Indian River County's Mental Health Court provides mentally ill defendants with the opportunity to receive community-based treatment and services through local providers while under the supervision of the Court. Mental Health Court is both a diversionary and supervisory program (as a condition of probation) that provides court supervision and social services through collaboration of state, county, and local non-profit agencies. Mental health courts generally share the following goals: to improve public safety by reducing criminal recidivism; to improve the quality of life of people with mental illnesses and increase their participation in effective treatment; and to reduce court and corrections related costs through administrative efficiencies and often by providing an alternative to incarceration. Monitoring and treating offenders with mental illness in a mental health court is a more effective, efficient, and less expensive option than the remedies available through traditional justice system approaches.

Participants who have met the minimum requirements of the program, engaged in treatment and services, abstained from alcohol and other drugs, and have displayed an improved quality of life, will be eligible for graduation. To date, 157 clients have participated in Indian River County's Mental Health Court with an additional 34 clients in Veteran's Court.

Sheriff Deryl Loar, with Indian River County's support, funds and oversees the Mental Health Court Program together with Public Defender Diamond Litty. Sheriff Loar and Judge Cynthia Cox, as co-chairs, in collaboration with members of Indian River County's Mental Health Collaborative, Vero Beach Police Chief Currey, Sebastian Police Chief Morris, Fellsmere Chief Touchberry and members from the State Attorney and Public Defender's Offices worked together for approximately two years before the first Mental Health Court session in Indian River County on January 27, 2015. This year the Indian River County Mental Health Court was a proud recipient of the Florida Criminal Justice Reinvestment Grant, which allows the Court to provide additional services.

In addition, Sheriff Loar and the Mental Health Court Team will recognize a CIT officer of the quarter for his/her outstanding implementation of the CIT philosophy. Crisis Intervention Training was developed to help law enforcement officers, recognize and respond to calls involving citizens with mental illness. CIT training promote and supports collaborative efforts to create and sustain more effective interactions among law enforcement, mental health care providers, individuals with mental illness, their families and communities and also to reduce the stigma of mental illness.

The public is invited to attend.