



Legal Beat

News and Notes on the D.C. Bar Legal Community

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Eight Dads Graduate From Fathering Court Program

On January 28 the Superior Court of the District of Columbia handed out diplomas to eight graduates of its Fathering Court initiative, the largest number of graduates since the program was launched in 2008. The Fathering Court is intended to help fathers returning from prison become better parents, both financially and emotionally. The program combines needs-assessment, skill development opportunities, case management, peer support, completion of a mandatory curriculum, and contact with community resources. Participants of the program also have access to such services as housing assistance and referrals, substance abuse treatment and counseling, and mediation services.

"Each of these gentlemen has done everything we've asked them to do and so much more, and they've done [it] for all the right reasons," said Fathering Court deputy clerk Ronnie A. Mitchell in his opening remarks. "I hope they recognize this more than just a graduation, but as the start of a solid foundation that will guide them through the rest of their lives. ... I always say that now that you've graduated, the work really begins."

Before receiving their diplomas, each of the graduates was introduced by someone who works for the program. Among the graduates was Reginald Tyson, once homeless but now holds two jobs and credits the program with helping him reenter society.



"It made me feel like I was a part of something; it helped me tremendously. The only way I can keep what I've got is by giving it back," Tyson said.

Fathering Court Presiding Judge Milton C. Lee also praised the work of this year's graduates. "You've overcome so much, demonstrating that there's really no limit to what you can accomplish. One thing that I want to ensure you have is that you're graduating from this program but you're not graduating from this family. You'll always be part of the Fathering Court," he said.

The graduation also featured comments from Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield; Ron Scott, Fathering Court program manager; Family Court Presiding Judge Zoe Bush; motivational speaker LeCount Holmes Jr.; and a musical performance from Soloman Howard.—K.A.