



16th Judicial Circuit
Jackson County, Missouri

For Immediate Release:
December 9, 2020

Contact: Valerie Hartman
Public Information Officer
816-881-3552

News Release

Treatment Court Commissioner David J. Fry to retire

The commissioner who oversaw the evolution and expansion of treatment courts in Jackson County will retire at the end of the year.

Commissioner David J. Fry, 67, was appointed to the bench in September 2007. Over the past 13 years, the treatment courts were expanded beyond the Jackson County Drug Court to include a Mental Health Court and a Veterans Court. All are designed to give individuals who qualify an opportunity to go through a treatment program rather than the normal path in the criminal justice system.

“It has been terribly rewarding to make a difference in someone’s life and we routinely do that,” said Fry.

Jackson County is home to one of the first drug courts in the nation and was created in 1993. Defendants charged with low level crimes related to drug offenses and who successfully complete an extensive court ordered treatment program will have their case dismissed. The offense does not go on a criminal record. The Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office decides which cases are eligible for the diversion program.

Fry, whose background includes working as an attorney with the Missouri State Public Defenders Office, the Jackson County Prosecutors Office and in private practice, says his role can be seen as an “encouraging source of authority.” He says, “Without an authoritative figure, many people are not motivated to make the changes that will lead them to a healthier lifestyle.”

In addition to working with individuals who qualify for Drug Court or Veterans Court, Fry also receives referrals from other judges to the Mental Health Court. Judges refer defendants on probation to Fry who they believe have mental health issues that need to be addressed.

Fry said, “There are 29 judges here already, and when they send somebody here, I think they all expect that if this place is not different than the conventional approach from probation or from the criminal justice system, then why have it?”

Presiding Judge David M. Byrn said, “Commissioner Fry’s professional knowledge and expertise has been key to the continuing success of Treatment Court and its well-deserved national recognition. He is greatly respected by the Court, prosecutors and others who provide services in Treatment Court. However, perhaps more important is the fact that he is respected by the defendants who appear in Treatment Court. They see his passion for their success in the compassion he has shown them – at the same time, those defendants also know Commissioner Fry will hold them accountable. On behalf of the Court, we tremendously appreciate Commissioner Fry’s years of service and wish him all the best in the future. He will be greatly missed.”

Fry retires on December 31, 2020 after 13 years of service.

###