

# Chelsea Drug Court Program a Success: Justice Barnes Leads End-of-the-Year Meeting

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By [Cary Shuman](#)

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 75 percent of Drug Court graduates remain arrest-free for at least two years after leaving the program.

That's a very good success rate and Tuesday's special program led by Justice Benjamin Barnes affirmed that the Chelsea Drug Court is working well and producing good results.

Justice Barnes presided over the Chelsea Drug Court's "End-of-the-Year Gratitude Circle" event inside a courtroom at the Chelsea District Court.

"It's a way in which we meet with everyone who is in Drug Court to state their plan for the holidays," said Barnes. "We have found that a lot of relapses happen this time of year. We also give them information as to where meetings are held to help them 24 hours a day."

Barnes said that all Drug Court participants have supervised probation and agree to go through the 18-month Drug Court program.

"They have a service provider such as the Salvation Army, Meridian House, East Boston Rehab, all residential treatment centers where these individuals are situated and they report to this court once a week- and they are tested three times a week," said Barnes.

One of the individuals at the Drug Court program praised Barnes for his professionalism and firm but fair understanding of her situation. The 26-year-old mother said she "is at a very good place" in her life and that she has been reunited with her daughter and received a promotion at her job.

"I have an amazing relationship with my family and a few good friends," she said proudly.

Drug courts in general are very beneficial, said Barnes. "Statistics have shown that individuals who successfully complete drug court have a lower recidivism rate than the average individual who just goes through probation."

Barnes said that the success of the Chelsea Drug Court is a collaborative effort among the entire court staff. “Everyone helps, but the main person is Judy Lawlor, who’s a pr



Pictured at the Chelsea Drug Court end-of-the-year event at Chelsea District Court are defense attorney David Bell, Justice Benjamin Barnes, who presides over the Drug Court, guest speaker Jack Kelly, Katie O’Leary, supervisor of recovery coaches at North Suffolk Mental Health Association, and Ruben Rodriguez, Chelsea community navigator for North Suffolk Mental Health Association.

obation officer and handles all the drug court cases. She coordinates with the different treatment providers.”

Jack Kelly, chief executive officer and founder of I Recover APP, was the guest speaker at Tuesday’s program. Kelly, a recovering drug addict, said his new company helps people with addictive issues by connecting them to services and to other people in recovery.

Kelly, who was a Boston city government neighborhood liaison to Charlestown and a past candidate for Boston City Council, delivered an inspiring address to the Drug Program participants. Kelly said he battled drug abuse issues for more than a decade but today leads an active, productive life, helping others on the road to recovery.