

Cass County Courts



CASS COUNTY FAMILY TREATMENT COURT REUNIFICATION CELEBRATION

Cassopolis, Michigan, June 27, 2022 – June is National Reunification Month and provides a time for communities to celebrate parents who worked hard to overcome obstacles to be reunited with their children as well as the teams of people and programs who work to help families stay together.

The Michigan Supreme Court hosted an in-person Reunification Day celebration in Lansing on June 17, 2022. “The beauty of reunification lies in the courage to recognize the power of second chances, and every year, at our Reunification Day celebration, we hear heartwarming stories of successful second chances,” said Justice Elizabeth T. Clement, MSC co-liason on child welfare issues. “This is why courts are invested in helping families, and reunification is the ultimate form of court-community engagement because courts are helping to make families—our friends and neighbors who are struggling—whole again, which makes communities stronger.”

On June 15, 2022, the Cass County Probate Courtroom was filled with members of the Cass County community to celebrate Reunification and recognize the people and efforts in Cass County facilitating families staying together. The gathering included graduates and current participants of the Cass County Family Treatment Court (FTC), members of the FTC team, DHHS workers, treatment professionals, court staff, county leaders, and community members. The celebration was opened with a welcome from Chief Judge Carol Bealor who encouraged those present to remember that a child’s life – just like an arrow – has a trajectory that everyone in our community can positively impact.

FTC Case Manager, Chelsea Schoetzow, a graduate from FTC, spoke about the impact coming into the system with her children had on her life. Schoetzow described how she went from a negative view of the court system to building a family of support through the members of FTC that she continues to stay in touch with. She contrasted the desperation created by substance use with the hope that has developed through recovery. Ms. Schoetzow’s real life experiences and continued recovery journey provide encouragement and serve as an example for current FTC participants as well as her own family.

FTC Case Manager and Co-Coordinator, Preston Collett, another graduate from FTC, also spoke about the impact coming into the system had on him when his son was removed from his care, and he realized how his mistakes were impacting more than just himself. He described his gratitude for retired Probate Court Judge Susan Dobrich, who was present for the celebration, and how she treated him with respect and gave him hope for his future during his court proceedings. The realization that there was hope for him set him on a trajectory of obtaining sobriety, getting involved in the recovery community, becoming a part of the FTC Team, and most importantly – reuniting with his son who is now an adult.

“We are so blessed in our community to have a committed team of individuals and organizations who believe in the importance of helping families stay together. This team is working daily to give hope to parents and children who need assistance overcoming various obstacles so they can be together. Our community is doing great things to restore and strengthen families, and reunification month is a great opportunity to stop and recognize this effort and the positive impact it has on the families in our community” said Chief Judge Bealor.



Pictured Left to Right: Chelsea Schoetzow, Cass County Probate Judge Carol M. Bealor, Retired Cass County Probate Judge Susan L. Dobrich, and Preston Collett