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DANE COUNTY OWI TREATMENT COURT MARKS ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH HIGH ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS

*Sixty Repeat OWI Offenders Enrolled in State-Local Pilot Program
Seven Successfully Complete Program So Far*

MADISON—A special Dane County Pilot Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) Treatment Court in Madison that targets hard core or repeat drunk drivers is producing positive results one year after the county and two state agencies teamed up to reduce drunk driving incidents and increase public safety.

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Dane County Courts, Dane County Human Services, Dane County Sheriff's Department, the State Public Defender's Office and Journey Mental Health Center formed a partnership and launched the Dane County Pilot OWI Treatment Court on July 1, 2011.

Just over one year later, the OWI Treatment Court enrollment capacity has been expanded from 40 to 60 participants, seven offenders have successfully graduated from the program, and there have been no incidents of drinking and driving.

Four of the 60 participants will likely be terminated from the court program; three have not attended scheduled probation agent meetings and DOC is moving to revoke another's probation for violating a supervision rule. However, state and local officials say the overwhelming majority of offenders in the program are doing well and early evidence shows the treatment court model is working.

"This OWI Treatment Court holds OWI offenders accountable while making sure they complete treatment and those are the keys to breaking the cycle of repeat drunk driving," said DOC Secretary Gary Hamblin. "The DOC is committed to continuing its partnership with Dane County and others who seek solutions to the serious problem of drunk driving and the devastating impact it has on our communities."

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Offenders in the OWI Treatment Court must serve minimum jail sentences and complete mandatory treatment. The program combines frequent judicial contact, incentives, sanctions and intensive probation supervision with alcohol use monitoring to make sure an offender finishes treatment. Offenders are also offered the free option of receiving the injectable version of the drug Naltrexone which reduces or stops the cravings for alcohol that can interfere with alcohol addiction treatment.

Three men who successfully completed the program became its most recent graduates Friday, August 17. After a regular session of the Dane County OWI Treatment Court, the graduates were given special certificates as well as advice and encouragement from OWI Treatment Court Judge Markson, DOC probation agents and addiction treatment providers. Since June, four others also have graduated from the OWI Treatment Court program.

All participants in the OWI Treatment Court program are Dane County residents and have been convicted of OWI three times with a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of .20 or more. Offenders entering the program must:

- receive an imposed and stayed jail sentence (the amount varies from case to case),
- and be placed on probation for two years with conditions they serve jail time for a minimum of 14 days and successfully finish a treatment program.

The OWI Treatment Court program has four phases of 90 days each. Each phase allows participant more freedom as they move through the program by coming to court less and seeing their agent less. All participants must remain on some type of alcohol testing throughout the court program to monitor their abstinence compliance.

The state-local partnership with DOC is possible due to Governor Walker's 2011-13 budget that appropriated 27.5 fulltime positions for the DOC Electronic Monitoring Center. The positions allow DOC to monitor the Dane County OWI Treatment Court participants as well as other 2nd and 3rd OWI offenders placed on probation due to 2010 legislative changes that expanded penalties for drunk driving.

DOC currently monitors 500 2nd and 3rd OWI offenders using the same Enhanced Supervision model used with the offenders referred to the Dane County OWI Treatment Court.

Drunk driving continues to take a toll across the nation and Wisconsin. Last year, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WI DOT) says there were 5,297 alcohol-related crashes on Wisconsin roads. Alcohol-related crashes in 2011 killed 225 people and 2,984 were injured.