? The Clark County Drug Treatment Court will host its ninth graduation Thursday, October 30 at 4:30 p.m.

The keynote speaker will be Ken Johnson, Chaplain for the Indianapolis Colts.

A blue-chip all American collegiate football player, Johnson grew up in an environment surrounded by drugs, alcohol and extreme poverty. After graduating with a B.S. in education, a knee injury prevented him from pursuing a pro-football career. He then worked as a police officer in the inner city of Tulsa, Oklahoma for six years.

He moved to Indianapolis to work for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and accepted the position of Chaplain for the Indianapolis Colts organization.

A national motivational speaker, his comments are based upon life experiences, work with the Colts' organization and the responsibilities that each of them share in helping one another.

In operation since May 2002, the Clark County Superior II Drug Treatment Court is a program for non-violent drug offenders who enroll in Drug Court in lieu of incarceration. The program is designed to last anywhere from 18 to 36 months. Participants who enter the program proceeds through three phases, with each phase increasing in responsibility and accountability.

Each participant is required to undergo treatment and counseling as determined by an individual treatment plan. In addition to staying drug free and committing no new crimes, they must improve their education and/or job relate skills, maintain employment, secure appropriate housing and become self-sufficient and more productive citizens. A Metro United Way agency, Drug Court collaborates with LifeSpring, Bliss House, Serenity House, SIABC, Ivy Tech and many other agencies to attack drug problems in the community.

To date, 103 participants have been enrolled, and five will graduate on October 30. This will bring the total number of graduates to 40.

Supervising Judge and Program founder, Cecile A. Blau, stated, "Drug Treatment Court is a proven successful option to give eligible addicted individuals in the criminal system the opportunities to acquire skills to combat addiction, stay crime free and improve the value of their life and their family's lives. This then improves the quality of life of each of us in this community by having one more productive individual and not an individual threatening the safety of each of us. This has been a program that I have been blessed to work with and have learned so much from."

One of Thursday's graduates said (before Drug Court), "I was feeling hopeless. So full of shame and guilt. Fear kept me from asking for what I needed. I never made any decisions for myself; they were always made for me, because of the bad choices I had made in the past. I have completed Drug Court, the Life Skills course and probation. I paid off liens against my house and all (outstanding) bad checks, opened a checking account, started a 401K and have held a job for three years. I'm a good employee, on time, work hard, honest and dependable and I get along with my co-workers. I have health insurance and car insurance. Drug Court has held me accountable and taught me responsibility. They loved me til I could love myself."

Another graduate stated, "Before I came to Drug Court I had never completed anything in my life. I completed (Drug Court's) Life Skills Program. I have accomplished so many things (in Drug Court) I pay my bills on time. I can hold down a job, paid off the IRS, and I've earned back the trust form my family. I am registered to vote and actually get to this year. I am very excited because it's the first time I have ever cared about anything like that. I have a 401K, a checking and savings account. My biggest accomplishment is, I lead a sober life."

The Drug Court Program graduation will begin at 4:30 p.m. in Clark Circuit Court. The public is invited to attend. Graduation is being conducted during National Red Ribbon Week. Red

ribbons are won the last week in October as a symbol of unit against the illegal use of drugs.