



# JOHN R. KASICH

GOVERNOR • STATE OF OHIO

---

## Communication Department

Sept. 11, 2015

Laura Jones, (614) 420-6946, [Laura.Jones@governor.ohio.gov](mailto:Laura.Jones@governor.ohio.gov)

### **FIRST LADY KASICH CELEBRATES CATCH COURT GRADUATES** ***Nationally recognized program gives victims of human trafficking new start***

COLUMBUS – Ohio First Lady Karen W. Kasich hosted today the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Changing Actions to Change Habits (CATCH) Court graduation at the Ohio Governor’s Residence and Heritage Garden in Bexley. A crowd of 200 guests gathered to honor six women who successfully completed the two-year CATCH program, which helps individuals charged with prostitution break free from the victimization of human trafficking.

“The life-changing achievements of today’s CATCH graduates – and the four classes of women before them – are truly inspirational. It’s hard to imagine the lives of violence and addiction they had to survive and the courage it took to say ‘yes’ to a new way of life,” said Mrs. Kasich. “It is a privilege to be with these ladies today and to celebrate their emergence as empowered members of the community.”



Franklin County Municipal Court Judge Paul Herbert founded CATCH Court in 2009 after recognizing that the women and men who repeatedly came before his bench on charges of prostitution were true victims of human trafficking – targets of exploitation, violence and often drug-addicted.

“We are honored to celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> class of CATCH Court Graduates. Two years ago, when they entered my courtroom, they hung their heads in shame and could barely make eye contact, much less speak. These remarkable women, who suffered unbelievable amounts of abuse and trauma, have overcome these injustices,” said Judge Herbert. “Today, they hold their heads high as they receive their diplomas in front of an entire community of friends, peers, mentors, and supporters. We are humbled by their strength, courage, and resiliency, and are thrilled to celebrate their successes”.

Mandatory weekly meetings with Judge Herbert are a touchstone of the CATCH Court program. During the two-year period, participants receive medical and mental health services as well as assistance developing skills needed to successfully rebuild their lives. Graduates of the rigorous program also have their criminal records expunged, a discretionary tool provided to court programs such as CATCH with the creation of Ohio’s Safe Harbor Law in 2012.

A two-year study of the CATCH program conducted by Franklin University in collaboration with other Ohio colleges and universities was recently released. Among the findings, data analyzed from 2009 to 2013 showed a reduction in prostitution arrests for Franklin County. The report also noted 72 percent of those who completed the program had no new criminal charges during the study period.

*For more information about First Lady Karen Kasich and her initiatives, visit [firstlady.ohio.gov](http://firstlady.ohio.gov).*

