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The
Magistrate
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“The Last Fix”

Submitted by Hon. Mark G. Farrell, Amherst Town Justice

At the recently conducted June 2010 Annual meeting of the National Association of Drug Court Treatment Professionals in Boston, Massachusetts, a singular honor was accorded to one our membership as Southampton Town Justice Debra Kooperstein debuted the documentary film “The Last Fix” reflective of the cutting edge lifesaving work being conducted in the East End Regional Intervention Court, also known as the Drug Court, implemented by Judge Kooperstein several years ago in the Southampton Town Court. Currently operated by Judge Kooperstein and Riverhead Town Justice Allen Smith, this Court mirrors the highly successful protocol of Drug Treatment Courts currently existing in over 2500 venues in the United States, whereby criminal defendants, whose offenses have a genesis in either drug or alcohol abuse or addiction are enrolled in a contract based, judicially monitored Therapeutic Intervention Court. This type of Court seeks to restore these individuals to society as productive members and attempts to alleviate the pain and suffering of the addict, eliminate the Defendant’s repetitive criminal activity and restore that person to the status of productive and contributing member of society.

While a number of other Town Courts around the state of New York have operated Drug Treatment Courts as in Amherst, New York since 1996, Justice Kooperstein’s endeavor to deal effectively and humanely with addiction in the Criminal Justice System was not easy to implement and it is a reflection of her energy, resourcefulness and creativity. This Court functions in one of the busiest jurisdictions in our town and village court system in the State of New York.

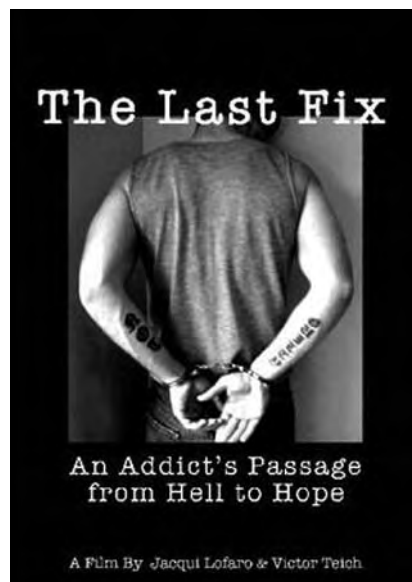
The story of addiction is a poignant one that can often reflect painful problems, painful personal suffering, recurrent criminal experience and collateral damage to both the individual’s family and

friends as well as society as a whole. Justice Kooperstein’s efforts in developing and implementing a successful Drug Treatment Court has been reflected in the media arena as a result of her successful collaboration with producer/director Jacqui Lofaro from Justice Productions, who sought to create a feature on drug addiction that follows addicts from their lives of crime into the drug court experience as an alternative to prison. The movie entitled “The Last Fix: An Addict’s Passage From Hell to Hope” is the third film in a trilogy of featured documentaries that tells three (3) stories of drug ravaged addicts thrown a lifeline out of crime and jail into treatment and recovery. The Last Fix offers an intimate look at drug addiction and drug offenders, the failure of the “War On Drugs” and “The Pioneering Drug Court Model emerging throughout the United States that offers an alternative to prison, treatment over punishment and a break in the cycle of repeat offenders.

Justice Kooperstein saw a unique opportunity to spread the message as to the importance and critical usefulness of Drug Treatment Courts by allowing film makers unprecedented access to her Drug Court on the East End of Long Island where not withstanding the celebrity, wealth and glamour of the area, there was an exploding drug problem. With the support of the Drug Treatment Court Judges, the film makers were allowed to film the offenders, record the court hear-

ings, cover and observe sensitive case management reviews with probation officers, lawyers, treatment providers and recount emotional but highly educational alumni meetings with prior drug court graduates who shared their stories and struggles about facing life clean.

The Last Fix penetrates a special Town Justice Court that, in accordance with the National Drug Court Protocol, streamlines drug cases away from the traditional punishment and into intensive drug treatment. East End Drug Court has graduated





over 50 Defendants in the last five (5) years and has experienced an extremely low rate of recidivism in terms of criminal activity. Delving into the lives of three actual criminal Defendants in the program, "The Last Fix" recounts how these Defendants initially became addicted, their spiraling habit that escalated from alcohol to marijuana to cocaine to crack to methamphetamine and the staggering cost that led them to crimes of prostitution and robbery to pay the street dealer. The documentary follows addicts ranging in age from an 18 year old adolescent to a middle aged Defendant. The documentary reflects the actual nightmare battles that these Defendants have with addiction, the rigors of Drug Treatment Court, the experience of random drug testing, attending AA and NA Meetings, inpatient stays, outpatient participation, separation from enabling network of family and friends, moving from recovery to showing the trials and tribulations of recovery, eventually getting a job, going back to work and reclaiming self dignity and responsibility. "The Last Fix" captures the joyous victory celebrations at graduation and reflects the opinions and praise from members of the Criminal Justice community including Judges, administrators and politicians who, now endorse the therapeutic approach to drug and alcohol addiction. This collaborative movie is a unique creation. It is now receiving national acclaim.

"The Last Fix" has received the direct affirmation of United States Attorney General, Eric Holder, who indicated "At my Justice Department, this is a top priority.... You have proven that redemption and rehabilitation are possible....Drug Courts reduce crime more than any other sentencing options." In screening this film in front of 3300 Drug Court Professionals in attendance at the National Conference in Boston, Justice Debra Kooperstein brought tremendous honor and prestige to the New York State Magistrates Association and to the Town and Village Justice System as a whole. This is a unique media event and is a tribute to the imagination and creativity of one of our own. The New York State Magistrates Association offers its hardy congratulations to Judge Kooperstein and her staff and urges that the membership obtain a copy of this film as representative of the quality of work that emanates from our Town and Village Courts.

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