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Former Maryland first lady sworn in as Anne Arundel assistant state's attorney



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Former MD first lady Kendel Ehrlich was sworn in Thursday as an assistant state's attorney

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The Anne Arundel State's Attorney's Office brought a little star power to its drug court program Thursday when former Maryland first lady Kendel Ehrlich was sworn in as an assistant state's attorney.

Ehrlich, the wife of former Gov. Robert Ehrlich, will start work Tuesday as head of the drug court program in District Court.

"That's a place where we solve problems," Ehrlich said. "There's a huge drug epidemic. Unfortunately heroin is a huge problem, and this is a place where people can have a second try at life."

Ehrlich's hiring comes as the State's Attorney's Office expands the program, working to rehabilitate non-violent offenders while targeting high-level drug dealers.

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Nearly 250 people are in the District Court drug court program, State's Attorney Wes Adams said. Capacity of the Drug Court program in Circuit Court is 80, but they're trying to increase it to 120, Adams said.

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Offenders can avoid incarceration if they complete the program, but face the possibility of jail time if they don't.

The program includes meetings with judges and parole and probation agents, as well as drug testing. Overseen by assistant state's attorneys, participants typically complete the program in 12 to 18 months.

Ehrlich will work 20 hours a week and receive a salary of \$39,500 a year, the State's Attorney's Office said.

Ehrlich is a former assistant state's attorney for the Harford County State's Attorney's Office, where she served for five years. Prior to that, she was a public defender for the Anne Arundel County Public Defender's Office.

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"Kendel brings both the experience as a prosecutor and a public defender, perfect for our problem-solving courts, plus she brings some awareness of this issue, which is huge for me," Adams said.

More recently, Ehrlich served as an adjunct instructor of Criminal Law for Anne Arundel County Community College.

"The times have changed a little since I've been in the courtroom, but not really," she said. "Unfortunately, the drug epidemic has even gotten worse."

The Ehrlichs held a fundraiser for Adams in 2014. Robert Ehrlich endorsed Adams.

Online campaign finance records show no contributions from the Ehrlichs to Adams' campaign.

The State's Attorney's Office said Ehrlich's hiring was unrelated to the fundraiser.

"She was hired on her experience and background in this area," said State's Attorney spokeswoman Heather Epkins.

Ehrlich helped establish the Maryland Teen Advisory Council, which worked toward reducing drug, alcohol and tobacco use among teens. She also serves on several boards, including the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Greater Baltimore Medical Center, and The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation.

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