



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

301 SECOND STREET - WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA 95695 - 530.666.8180 - FAX 530.666.8185

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Date: August 7, 2019 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy DA
Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org
Bilingual Spanish Representative available
@ (530)666-8356

West Sac Homeless Woman Graduates from Mental Health Court
Subrina Seaton now has her children back and her own apartment

(Woodland, CA) – August 7, 2019 – On August 6, 2019, 37-year-old Subrina Seaton graduated from Mental Health Court in Department 14 of the Yolo County Superior Court. Three years ago, Ms. Seaton was arrested by the West Sacramento Police Department on a robbery case. At the time, she was homeless with an extensive rap sheet dating back to when she was a juvenile.

Mental Health Court (MHC) is a minimum 18-month court-based treatment and monitoring system for adult offenders with a serious mental illness. Mental Health Court is designed to increase the treatment engagement of the participants while reducing both arrests, hospitalizations, and jail time both during and after their involvement and participation in the program. The program is a collaborative effort between the Yolo County Superior Court, Probation, Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), the Public Defender, and the District Attorney. MHC follows the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment model where participants get intense services two hours per week or meet with staff four times per week. The team provides participants with wrap-around treatment which includes a focus on mental health, substance abuse, housing, vocational and school, and physical health. The goal is to address the criminogenic factors and reduce recidivism. The last phase of the program is a restorative justice component where participants spend 4-6 weeks recounting their crime and the circumstances that led to the crime. The participant acknowledges who was harmed by the crime and how they were harmed. Lastly, the participant is asked what needs to be done to makes things right. In Ms. Seaton's case she wrote an apology letter to the victim of her crime and she put together care packets to pass out to the homeless.

Ms. Seaton is the eleventh MHC participant to graduate. A results-based assessment conducted during fiscal year 2017-2018 showed significant accomplishments.

During the 12-month period after enrolling in Mental Health Court, participants had a 96% decrease in jail bed stays, a 100% decrease in local hospital bed stays and a 100% decrease in state hospital bed stays. During the 12-month period after leaving Mental Health Court, participants had a 96% decrease in jail bed stays, a 67% decrease in local hospital bed stays, and a 100% decrease in state hospital bed stays. In order to serve more individuals, the team now is working on obtaining additional funding through the county, grants and Mental Health Services Act funding.

During the graduation, team members shared their thoughts while addressing Ms. Seaton and the court. Judge David Rosenberg, who presides over Mental Health Court, congratulated Ms. Seaton and stated, "Today we have a graduation. This is an honor we bestow upon Mental Health Court participants." While looking at other MHC participants, he continued, "and this is where we want all of you to be in the future." Judge Rosenberg then asked the team members to share their thoughts. HHSa Clinical Supervisor Kristi Abbott told Ms. Seaton, "You have so many qualities that will be left with the team. You have amazing patience, you are calm and show such grace." Abbott continued, "Anything that could go wrong did go wrong. But you started to impress us from the beginning in the way you handled it. The person you are today is almost unrecognizable from the person you were before." Supervising Deputy District Attorney Chris Bulkeley next took the podium after being on a phone call in the hallway. "I have had a tough day but seeing that smile on your face makes all those feelings go away. Congratulations!" Deputy Public Defender Bret Bandley told Ms. Seaton "We've been together since February, 2018. Then you were quiet, suspicious, shy, withdrawn and rarely smiled. Now I never see you not smiling." HHSa Forensic Case Worker Terri Lipelt stepped to the microphone. "When I picked you up from the jail and dropped you off at residential treatment in Sacramento on a Friday I didn't think you still be there on Monday. But you were still there and now you have your children back, your life back, and your own apartment."

Judge Rosenberg then asked the audience if anyone wanted to speak. MHC graduate Dennis Cortopassi told Ms. Seaton, "I know how much work goes into graduation. You should be proud of yourself. If you ever get in trouble again, this team is here to help you." Jessie Tessler, another graduate who also works with the team as a Peer Support Worker, told Ms. Seaton "To see you get your own place and furnish it is such a blessing. Your story is now just beginning."

Finally, Judge Rosenberg turned to Ms. Seaton and told her "this is your day." Ms. Seaton thanked the team for giving her a second chance. "Thank you for letting me know I had a mental illness. At first I thought it was a joke. I made it and I'm proud of myself."

Judge Rosenberg then presented Ms. Seaton with a graduation diploma and gave her a hug. Everyone then ate cake and pizza, including a German Chocolate bundt cake baked by Judge Rosenberg.

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