



COUNTY OF YOLO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Davis Woman Graduates from Addiction Intervention Court

(Woodland, CA) – On October 27, 2022, a 24-year-old Davis woman successfully graduated from Addiction Intervention Court (AIC) in Yolo County. Although she felt it was important for her story to be told, she asked to remain anonymous due to the stigma placed on people living with substance use disorders. She will be referred to as Barbara Fermin. Fermin had been participating in AIC for nearly three years before graduating. AIC team members, along with Fermin’s mother, were present for graduation.

Addiction Intervention Court (AIC) is a specialty court program that serves up to 30 individuals who struggle with substance use disorders and are involved in the criminal justice system as a result of their addiction. The program is a collaborative effort comprised of the Yolo County Public Defender’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, the Yolo County Superior Court, the Probation Department, and the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). The program provides intensive support services and supervision aimed at increasing a participant’s overall quality of life while reducing recidivism. AIC is an 18-24 month program.

In September 2019, Fermin was in jail for possession of heroin. The judge agreed to release her for a doctor’s appointment if she promised to return to jail after the appointment. Fermin agreed but never returned to jail. After a warrant was issued for her arrest, she was re-arrested in mid-October, facing a new charge of “Felony Escape from Jail.” Supervising Deputy District Attorney Chris Bulkeley had numerous lengthy conversations with Fermin’s mother about what could be done to help Fermin, who was then 21 years of age. In late October 2019, Bulkeley had discussions with HHSA staff and Fermin’s attorney about referring Fermin to AIC. All agreed, and in early November, Fermin was referred to AIC.

On January 21, 2020, Fermin was in court for her first AIC appearance. For the next 13 months, Fermin struggled with her addiction and relapsed on numerous occasions. The team was very close to terminating her from the program, and the members were not optimistic about her success. But Fermin kept trying, and on April 15, 2021, Fermin was placed at a residential treatment facility in El Dorado County called Progress House. For the first time in a long time, Fermin got sober and began to flourish. AIC progress notes over the next 16 months included the statements such as, “doing really well,” “doing great,” and “always amazing and fantastic.”

Prior to AIC graduation, participants are required to write an essay about their experience in AIC. In Fermin’s, she stated, “I hear a lot of people say until you’re really ready, you’ll never get clean, and maybe that’s true for some people, but honestly, I don’t know if I ever would have felt 100% ready, thankfully for me the Yolo County courts and AIC didn’t give me a choice.”

At the graduation, members of the AIC team congratulated Fermin and told her how proud they were of her. Speakers included AIC Judge Tom Dyer, Deputy Public Defender Bret Bandle, Deputy Probation officer Guillaume Denoix, HHSA Case Managers Terri Lipelt, and Amanda Narvaez, and District Attorney representatives Chris Bulkeley and Jonathan Raven. The last speaker before Fermin was Fermin’s mother, who

described the inner strength of Fermin and praised her for her ability to persevere and achieve this success. Finally, Fermin spoke and thanked the team for all their support and efforts. The team and AIC participants then celebrated in court with a pizza and cake party. Fermin stated, "I'm lucky to be alive. If I were using today, I'd be dead. People are no longer using heroin; it's now all about the fentanyl which kills you."

Fermin is currently on staff at Progress House, where she helps those who, like her, are living with substance use disorders. When asked if she was going to celebrate her graduation tonight, she said, "no, I'm working. I took a swing shift because the staff at Progress House needed help." For the next year, Fermin will participate in the AIC alumni program, where she will provide support to current AIC participants and attend events with other AIC graduates. Judge Dyer scheduled a court date of October 20, 2023, at which time all charges against Fermin will be dismissed, and she will have a clean record.

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