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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** July 3, 2018

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**Davis Resident Graduates from Mental Health Court**

(Woodland, CA) – July 3, 2018 – Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that on Monday June 11, 2018, 28-year-old Davis resident Jessie Tessler successfully graduated from Mental Health Court in Department Six of the Yolo County Superior Court.

Mental Health Court (MHC) is a minimum 18-month court-based treatment and monitoring system for adult offenders with serious mental illness. Mental Health Court is designed to increase the treatment engagement of the participants while reducing both arrests 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, the Public Defender, and the District Attorney.

Ms. Tessler’s mother, Courtney Tessler, and father Stephen Tessler, and other family members joined her for the graduation ceremony. Courtney Tessler regularly attended Mental Health Court hearings from April, 2016, when Jessie entered the program, through her graduation 26-months later. Courtney Tessler noted, “We are proud of our daughter for being the first woman to graduate from Mental Health Court after over two years of intensive work. Dealing with a dual diagnosis is an internal struggle that requires the empathy and expertise of professionals committed to learning and understanding what support is most effective. There is no quick remedy. Parents should never give up; just like the staff connected to Mental Health Court never gave up on our daughter.”

Stephen Tessler, Ms. Tessler’s father, commented, “Mental health treatment and the law is all over the news these days. There are many ways of delivering these needed services. The Mental Health Court is a terrific example of what that can look like. Jessie

is the first woman to complete the Mental Health Court program. I hope her hard work will lead the way for the other struggling women to succeed in Mental Health Court.”

Ms. Tessler is the second Mental Health Court participant to graduate after entering the program with a Deferred Entry of Judgment (DEJ) instead of being placed on probation with a criminal conviction. Max Land was the first successful DEJ graduate last April. By the terms of her DEJ agreement, Ms. Tessler was never convicted of a crime and all charges were dismissed upon her successful completion of Mental Health Court. This new process allows an individual with no prior criminal history to participate in this program and graduate with no criminal convictions which often can be an impediment to future educational opportunities, employment and housing.

Public Defender Tracie Olson stated, “We are proud of Jessie’s hard work and accomplishments in Mental Health Court. Deferred Entry of Judgment is trending toward decriminalizing the mentally ill and we look forward to further steps in this direction.”

District Attorney Jeff Reisig commended Ms. Tessler for her hard work during the 26-months she was in the program commenting, “Over two years ago we saw the value of offering DEJs to young men and women such as Ms. Tessler and Mr. Land that allows them to successfully complete the Mental Health Court program and re-enter society with no criminal convictions. The use of DEJs in this manner diverts individuals into treatment where they gain valuable insight into their mental health along with the ability to better manage it. As this program continues to be a successful way to address criminal justice involved individuals suffering from mental illness, we look to expand the use of DEJs as a form of Mental Health Court diversion.”

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