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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sacramento Woman Graduates from Mental Health Court  
Ashley Crimmins goal now is to become a social worker**

(Woodland, CA) – March 6, 2019 – On March 5, 2019 29-year-old Ashley Crimmins successfully graduated from Mental Health Court in Department 14 of the Yolo County Superior Court. Ashley was born and raised in Woodland and now lives in Sacramento.

Mental Health Court 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, the Public Defender, and the District Attorney. Mental Health Court 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.

Ashley is the ninth Mental Health Court participant to graduate from Mental Health Court. Currently, due to lack of funding, Mental Health Court is limited to 15 participants. Although the judge, defense attorney and district attorney play a critical role, the team counts on the significant work from Probation Officer Stephen Svetich and Kristi Abbott, who is the clinical supervising social worker of the forensic team at the Health and Human Services Agency. 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 Ashley and the court. Judge David Rosenberg, who presides over Mental Health Court, congratulated Ashley and stated, "I read your essays which were very insightful and profound. You have given a lot of thought to your past and future. You are to be commended for that." Supervising Deputy District Attorney Chris Bulkeley posed the question, "why do we fall down, Ashley? The answer is so we learn how to pick ourselves up. And you have done that in amazing fashion." Ashley's attorney Ava Landers talked about how proud she was of her. Landers said, "you have come so far since when I first met you in jail." Landers then walked to the witness stand and gave Ashley a hug. Probation Officer Stephen Svetich commented that when a participant graduates, he often looks at booking photos taken after the arrest. Svetich told Ashley, "I don't recognize that person in your booking photo." He continued, "your enthusiasm is infectious and I'm confident you will maintain this success." Finally, Social Worker Kristi Abbott said "even when you were struggling, you were still likeable. After you were at Promise House something clicked and you never looked back." Abbott concluded "you are the best of what Mental Health Court can do for people. You give hope to what we can do for people in the future."

Judge Rosenberg then asked the audience if anyone wanted to speak. A young man approached the podium and introduced himself as Ashley's boyfriend. He said "I wanted to say how proud I am of you. Ashley comes into a room and wants to be the person who takes care of everyone." Jesse Tessler then approached the podium. Tessler, who is a past Mental Health Court graduate and is now Health and Human Services Peer Support Worker, stated "I remember living with you and watched you change. Something clicked for you." Tessler congratulated Ashley and said "you'll be getting alumni letters from me to stay involved and help those still in the program."

Judge Rosenberg then presented Ashley with a graduation diploma and gave her a hug. Everyone then ate cake and pizza, including the lemon bunt cake baked by Judge Rosenberg.

Ashley's goal is to go back to school and become a social worker to help others.

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