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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Woodland Man Graduates from Addiction Intervention Court via  
Zoom**

**(Woodland, CA) – September 17, 2020** – On September 17, 2020, 25-year-old Woodland man Jordan Spears successfully graduated from Addiction Intervention Court in Department 14 of the Yolo County Superior Court. The graduation was done virtually using the Zoom platform.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit, all AIC court appearances were cancelled to avoid further spread of the virus. In early April, 2020, Yolo County’s justice partners rebooted Mental Health Court (MHC) and Addiction Intervention Court (AIC) by having its first informal “Zoom Court” where participants met with team members and the AIC and MHC judges through Zoom video conferencing. In preparation, the treatment team contacted participants and helped them learn how to use Zoom. On Thursday, September 17, 2020 the MHC team held its first ever live, virtual informal court hearing. The first AIC informal Zoom court occurred on April 16.

Addiction Intervention Court (AIC) is a specialty court program that serves up to 20 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 between the Yolo County District Attorney’s Office, the Yolo County Superior Court, the Public Defender, the Probation Department, and Health and Human Services Agency. The program provides intensive support services and supervision aimed at increasing a participant’s overall quality of life while reducing recidivism.

On September 17, 2020 at 2 pm, Spears, other AIC participants, and Woodland Police Department Officer Gina Bell, and Deputy District Attorney Deanna Hays entered the Zoom “waiting room” and were “admitted” into Zoom Court for Spears’ graduation. Spears had been participating in AIC for over two years. AIC team members, along with friends of Spears, also were “in court” by Zoom.

Spears had been arrested by a Yolo County Sheriff's deputy on February 11, 2018 for driving a stolen vehicle, possession of burglary tools, possession of paraphernalia used to inject controlled substances. At the time of Jordan's arrest, he was transient and living in Woodland. Spears had been convicted of numerous drug-related crimes and admitted to using methamphetamine on a regular basis. He reported that he had never participated in formal substance abuse treatment and he expressed a desire to stop using drugs and narcotics and to engage in treatment to assist him with that goal.

Spears was referred to the AIC team for assessment. The team believed he had a substance use disorder and his present and past crimes were driven by his drug addiction. The team found him suitable for AIC and his first appearance in AIC court was April 16, 2018. Initially, Spears had difficulty with the program and walked about from a residential treatment facility. After writing a letter asking for one more chance, he continued in AIC. He engaged with the Day Reporting Center at the jail and got glowing reviews, and also received services from CommuniCare for his substance use disorder. In April, 2019, he started work at Denny's restaurant. In the Fall of 2019, was able to purchase a car and get auto insurance. Spears continued to do well in AIC, including during the pandemic.

Judge David Rosenberg presided over the Zoom graduation. Health and Human Services Forensic Case Manager Amanda Navaez was the first to congratulate Spears stating, "You have come such a long way. You stayed clean, got a job and a car. You gave it your all. Next, Deputy Public Defender Bret Bandley, who represents Spears, told Spears, "I've watched you grow so much in the 45 court appearances where I've been by your side. You have come so far." Judge Rosenberg then asked Deputy District Attorney Deanna Hays, who prosecuted the case before Spears entered Addiction Intervention Court, to speak. She told Spears, "You earned this. Take a minute to enjoy this mountain top." And finally, Woodland Police Department Gina Bell congratulated Spears on behalf of the Department. "You and I go back so many years. You look so healthy. I look forward to seeing you around Woodland."

Judge Rosenberg told Spears he was the "poster child" for those fighting addiction and then asked Spears to speak. Jordan said "I've got good news. I've been offered an assistant manager position at my job." With a smile on his face he concluded, "I used to dislike a lot of you people but now you are definitely part of my family."

Normally, MHC and AIC graduations conclude with cake and pizza. Just prior to the graduation, the team had pizza and cake delivered to Spears at his home in Woodland. Spears will also participate in the AIC alumni program which allows graduates to stay involved with the program and mentor others who are still in the program.

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