



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GRADUATION FROM MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION COURT HELD

(Woodland, CA) – March 22, 2024 Just over a year after entering Yolo County’s Mental Health Diversion Court, Esther Bibriesca successfully completed it and she was honored in a graduation ceremony earlier this week. Mental Health Diversion Court is one of Yolo County’s specialty courts that launched in October 2021. The goal of the court is to enhance public safety and reduce recidivism of those who live with mental illness and/or a substance use disorder, and those behavioral health issues were a significant factor in the commission of their criminal offense. The program accomplishes this goal by supporting their participation in community treatment. This is done with the collaboration of the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the Probation Department, the Sheriff’s Department, the Court, and CommuniCareOLE Health Centers all working together to support the clients.

Program requirements include maintaining sobriety, being medication compliant if appropriate, attending all required appointments and court hearings and writing reflective essays for each of the four phases to be completed.

Multiple speakers spoke about the journey Esther has had in her recovery and how impressed they were with her commitment to change her life. In an essay Esther wrote that she said that she’d “learned that nobody is perfect, and that life is a rollercoaster, but it’s what we do about it that makes a difference.” Chief Deputy District Attorney Melinda Aiello praised Esther for being a role model and example for others. “By taking the harder path that included Mental Health Diversion Court and all its requirements, Esther choose to really effect change instead of doing the minimum in the more traditional criminal justice route.” Judge Janet Gaard presided over the graduation and presented Esther her certificate of completion.

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