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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
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THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT CELEBRATES THREE DRUG COURT GRADUATES

Chief Judge Diane E. Winter greeted attendees, both in-person and virtually, as the families of the graduates and the Therapeutic Intensive Monitoring (TIM) Court team gathered to celebrate Sandra, Donald, and Ryan for their 24 to 30 months of successful monitoring and clean-time. She stated, "We are fortunate and privileged to be able to gather for the celebration of our graduates' significant achievements. Today is your new beginning, Sandra, Donald, and Ryan. You have had the courage, determination, and perseverance to change your lives. I am sure you have had struggles along the way, but you and your loved ones now have a chance for a better life. Lake County is fortunate to have an outstanding team of dedicated professionals and volunteers who serve in our treatment Courts; and without our Judges and volunteers, the three of you would not be here today. Sandra, Donald, and Ryan, you will now begin this new phase of your life with a clear mind and a clean body. We are very proud of you, and on behalf of the entire Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, I congratulate you."

Presiding Judge of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's Specialty Courts, Circuit Judge Christen L. Bishop, explained the importance and impact of the TIM Court programs. She stated, "Drug Court is our oldest Specialty Court, it emerged in 2005 out of a recognition by a committee of Lake County officials who saw a substantial number of high-risk addicted offenders engaging in a continued pattern of criminal behavior. It was a cycle of visits to the Department of Corrections, back into the community, and then back to the Department of Corrections because of criminal behavior needed to support an addiction, a disease. It is our mission to promote community safety by reducing substance abuse and recidivism of our high-risk substance use disordered offenders through a coordinated program that includes treatment, intense supervision, and judicial interaction. The requirements needed to succeed in this program are completion of four phases: a minimum of 24 and up to 30 months in the program with negative drug and alcohol tests up to three times a week, weekly meetings with probation, attendance at self-help support groups with verification of the attendance, sponsor contact, employment, stable housing, financial responsibility, and the development of a strong relapse prevention plan. I can tell you that Sandra, Donald, and Ryan not only completed all the requirements, but they did so with flying colors. These three are examples for the current clients and for clients to come in the future."

This was the second Drug Court graduation for the 19th Judicial Circuit since the pandemic began. Lake County Specialty Court programs were amongst the first in the state to transition to court via the Zoom virtual platform, ensuring that the clients could continue to connect with the team. In addition, she praised the TIM Court team for going above and beyond to interact with the clients and combat the isolation that accompanied the stay-at-home order, while continuing to hold the clients accountable.

Judge Bishop impressed upon and recognized the importance and impact of the Drug Court team: her former Drug Court partner Circuit Judge Christopher R. Stride, her new Drug Court partner Associate Judge Paul B. Novak, Chief Judge Diane E. Winter, members of the Lake County Adult Probation Department, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office including Hitch the TIM Court Labrador Retriever, the Lake County Public Defender's

Office, the Lake County Health Department, public officials, law enforcement officers, former program participants, volunteers, mentors, and treatment centers.

Anthony, recovery volunteer, spoke on behalf of graduate Donald, sharing “I met Donald and knew he was a hard worker, and that he was going to be a positive, productive, and an active member of the community. He has a passion and heart for helping others. He showed a light and fire that he brought into this program, and he removed the stigma of asking for help. He attacked the disease, his addiction, his actions, his mindset, and his behavior. I am grateful for all of those who have been in this program and who help people like Donald change their life.”

Bill Nee, Haymarket Recovery Coach, spoke on behalf of graduate Ryan, stating “I met Ryan and did his assessment. Ryan chose Drug Court knowing it was not the easy path, but it was the only path that was going to give him, an addict, the opportunity to make changes. Ryan is stubborn, but he came around because of his gift of desperation that allowed him to be humble enough to listen. His journey in Drug Court was unbelievable. Ryan is now living a productive life, people can count on him, it is a great thing. And I am proud to call Ryan a friend. He knows his real journey starts now.”

Lindsay Gore, Senior Probation Officer, spoke on behalf of graduate Sandra, stating “You came into this program, and in your own words said, ‘Here is my plan: I will set goals for my life, be honest with myself, be accountable, responsible, and dependable, but most of all I will ask for help when I need it.’” You had enough, your attitude shifted, and your life transformed. You demonstrated tremendous strength throughout the last two and a half years. You had many challenges you faced head-on; and your journey was one of bravery. You were never too proud to ask for support. Be proud of your story, embrace who you are, live with integrity, and maintain the healthy boundaries that you worked so hard to create.”

Judge Bishop concluded the ceremony by stating, “Sandra has 925 days of clean-time, Ryan has 763 days, and Donald has 735 days. It is now my privilege, honor, and duty to announce that you are all hereby discharged from any further obligations of this Court and your Drug Court probation is terminated. Your cases are closed. Congratulations.”

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