



SUPERIOR COURT OF
CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN
180 E. Weber Avenue
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www.sicourts.org

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 2, 2025

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COLLABORATIVE COURTS TO HOLD GRADUATION CEREMONY

Thursday, May 8, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

Bob Hope Theater, 242 E. Main Street, Stockton, CA

STOCKTON, CA – Celebrating Milestones in Recovery: Collaborative Court Program Graduation.

“We are delighted to announce the graduation of over 240 participants from our Collaborative Court Programs. Our programs address drug-related offenses through rehabilitative approaches, which have proven to be instrumental in supporting participants on their journey to recovery. The Collaborative Court Programs have reduced recidivism rates and improved participants' lives. We remain committed to providing compassionate, evidence-based, and practical approaches to addressing drug addiction within our community. When a member of our community finds sobriety, we, collectively as a whole, win.” – Kelly Placeres, Director of Collaborative Courts

"I have attended graduations in the past, but last year I was shaking hands and congratulating the graduates for the first time as a Collaborative Court judge; always a joyful and heartwarming celebration of accomplishment!" - Judge Carter Holly

The graduation program will feature:

Congratulatory Remarks—Assemblywoman Rhodesia Ransom. Assemblywoman Ransom represents California's 13th Assembly District, which includes the vibrant communities of Stockton, Tracy and Mountain House. With over two decades of experience in public service, the Assemblywoman has been a fierce advocate for social justice, equitable education, and economic empowerment. As a former Tracy City Councilmember and non-profit leader, she stood up for the most vulnerable, strengthened economic opportunities, and fought to reduce homelessness in the region.

Key Note Speaker—William Smith, Jr. William Smith, Jr. is a singer, songwriter, entertainer and recording artist. He has 33 years in recovery from alcoholism, earned a counseling certification from the University of the Pacific, and labors passionately to help people break free from addiction.

Graduate Speaker—Stephen Chew. Despite spending 14 years in prison and struggling with opiate addiction, Stephen has emerged resilient and determined. Since entering Parole Reentry Court program in January 2024, Stephen enrolled and graduated from UEI College Trade School with a certificate in electrical work. He is now enrolled at Delta College. He completed the Geo Reentry program and now serves as a mentor, guiding newly enrolled clients.

Graduate Speaker—Justin Herring. Justin's life had been marred by a long struggle with meth and alcohol addiction, leading him in and out of prison. He entered Dependency Drug Court in December of 2023. He completed 120 days in residential



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Collaborative Courts Hold Graduation Ceremony
(cont.)

treatment, secured a good position at a concrete company and established a strong support system. Justin faced many struggles during his early recovery, but remained unwavering in his commitment to change and reunifying with his child. He was awarded full custody of his daughter on February 13, 2025.

For more information, please contact Kelly Placeres at 992-5225.

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