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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315
En Español [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

DA Joins Forces to Help the Homeless Clear Infractions, Misdemeanors off their Records

Program is DA, Public Defender, City Attorney, Superior Court Collaboration

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that her office is joining forces with criminal justice partners to help the homeless population currently living at the Alpha Project Shelter located in Downtown San Diego. The innovative “Justice Day” program is a collaborative effort between the District Attorney, Superior Court, Public Defender and the City Attorney. A courtroom is essentially set up on site where residents have an opportunity to resolve court cases related to minor infractions and some misdemeanor conduct that was the result of circumstances surrounding homelessness. The program allows for court fines and fees to be deemed satisfied by recognizing their efforts in recovery. It also allows for a limited number of minor offenses to be dismissed in order to allow a path for individuals to move forward in life. To date, about 23 participants have been pre-screened and deemed eligible to participate in the program, based on their engagement with services at Alpha Project and their commitment to breaking the cycle of homelessness in their own lives.

“This Justice Day is one of the innovative ways that we help remove barriers and rebuild the lives of individuals who are homeless, by taking the Court directly to the bridge shelters,” said District Attorney Summer Stephan. **“Today we help address outstanding citations or warrants that are just one more roadblock for someone who’s doing their best to turn their life around, get off the street, find a place to live and get a job.”**

According to the most recent Regional Task Force on the Homeless Point-In-Time Count, almost two thirds of the unsheltered population has had some involvement with the justice system.

“One of the many missions of the Public Defender’s Office is to help those that have difficulty helping themselves. For many homeless clients, it is their past and not their present that is preventing them from escaping the cycle of homelessness. Something as simple as an unpaid

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trolley ticket could prevent the client from obtaining a driver’s license,” said Public Defender Randy Mize. “For these clients, being able to provide rehabilitation and a hand-up through Homeless Court, instead of incarceration, helps break down barriers to becoming a productive member of our community.”

“My Office has worked hard to develop innovative approaches that fill a critical void in our region’s approach to homelessness. Our San Diego Misdemeanants At Risk Track Program, which provides participants with tailored drug treatment programs, counseling, bridge housing, case management, and wrap around services, has helped our most vulnerable citizens get off the streets. Justice Day is yet another tool we’ll use to provide meaningful intervention and hope for those who need it most.”

Alpha Project is a nonprofit human services organization that serves over 4,000 men, women, and children each day. Part of the services offered by Alpha Project includes work, recovery and support services to homeless individuals who are motivated to change their lives and achieve self-sufficiency.

“Alpha Project would like to thank everyone involved with providing the Homeless Court session at the Temporary Bridge Shelter,” said Bob McElroy, CEO of Alpha Project. A lot of our residents will benefit from this service. This is a tremendous blessing”

The District Attorney’s Office has also dedicated two [victim resource ‘navigators’](#) who are specifically tasked to be at the shelters and screen individuals who are victims of crime, connecting them to additional resources they may not have known about, such as victim compensation, mental health services and housing.

Separate from Justice Day, the District Attorney continues to participate in Homeless Court, which is part of the DA’s Collaborative Courts program. Homeless Court continues to operate on a monthly basis at St. Vincent DePaul Village or Veterans Village of San Diego. On average, over 200 cases are addressed in Homeless Court for 60 participants each month. Collaborative Courts also participates in Stand Down, an annual summer event, which is a program that helps local homeless veterans get off the streets and back on track.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue justice and support victims daily across San Diego County. DA Summer Stephan has devoted her life to protecting children and families and providing justice to the voiceless and most vulnerable. She is a national leader in the fight against sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and has served as a Deputy District Attorney in San Diego County for 28 years.

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