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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

*****SAN FRANCISCO YOUNG ADULT COURT GRADUATION*****

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – The San Francisco Young Adult Court held its graduation on Thursday afternoon for six distinguished young people who have overcome many obstacles while in the program, including completing residential treatment, finding full-time employment, were the victims of violence, experienced homelessness, and other significant challenges.

The San Francisco Young Adult Court (YAC) was established in summer 2015 for eligible young adults, ages 18-24 who have been arrested with educational, vocational, and other personal needs. The Honorable Bruce Chan, Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco has presided over the Young Adult Court (YAC) since its beginning. YAC is an innovative program based on neuroscience that takes into account the developmental differences inherent in transitional aged youth compared to juveniles and adults.

“Young Adult Court graduation is the most joyful part of my judicial career,” said Honorable Judge Chan. “It is a privilege and honor to help guide young people away from the justice system into a promising future.”

“I am proud of the young people graduating today,” said Board of Supervisors President Shamann Walton. “As someone who was in and out of juvenile hall in my teenage years, I understand the challenges that our cohort of graduates faced and recognize the need for exposure to different opportunities and mentors to pursue a better future.”

Each year, more than 60 participants are referred by the Public Defender’s Office, adult probation, private counsel and the District Attorney’s office. As part of this program, each participant comes to the courtroom at least once a week, and on average, it takes a year to a year and a half to complete the program. Participants also participate in educational and therapeutic



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sessions while meeting with case managers weekly. On completion of the program, potential felony convictions are erased to avoid derailing employment opportunities.

“To the incoming participants: be consistent, be honest and open, be willing to accept help from others, and be willing to work with others.” Said one graduate. (Identities are kept anonymous for safety concerns).

“You need to change your way of thinking and your patterns,” said another graduate. “You might not want to listen at first, but if you think about the long term, you can complete it.”

“We make mistakes but how badly do you want to get this mistake off of your record?” Commented by another graduate.

The unique nature of San Francisco’s YAC model is due not only to its deep roots in neuroscience—which indicates that critical portions of the brain regulating risk-taking and impulsive behavior are still developing substantially until the mid-twenties— but also in its acceptance and prioritization of participants who have committed serious felony offenses. In this way, San Francisco is demonstrating a commitment to altering the composition of San Francisco’s in-custody population where transitional aged youth are overrepresented, as well as the life trajectory of young adults with serious crimes and barriers. The court strives to align opportunities for accountability and transformation with the unique needs and developmental stage of this age group. The latest data from Young Adult Court shows 73% of graduates have avoided being re-arrested in San Francisco County.

About Honorable Judge Bruce Chan of the SF Superior Court of CA:

Judge Chan graduated from Stanford University in 1978 and received his law degree in 1981 from the University of California at Davis. He worked as a trial attorney with the San Francisco Public Defender's Office for 15 years and was a State Bar of California Certified Criminal Law Specialist. His professional experience also includes 3 years in private practice, specializing in insurance defense litigation. From 2000 to 2004, Judge Chan served as Chief Counsel to the Assembly Committee on Public Safety. The Committee is responsible for analyzing proposed criminal justice legislation introduced in both the State Assembly and Senate. After being elected by the Judges of the San Francisco Superior Court to the position of Court Commissioner, Judge



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Chan heard law and motion matters relating to the civil discovery act until his appointment to the bench in 2009.

About Board of Supervisors President Shamann Walton:

District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton currently serves as the President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He was born in San Francisco and lived in public housing at an early age in Bayview and Potrero Hill. He has worked in District 10 neighborhoods for decades and has witnessed firsthand the challenges our community faces from long-time residents being pushed out of the city to losing childhood friends to violence and incarceration. As an accomplished and experienced community leader, Shamann has dedicated his life to improving these realities in our community and is committed to identifying solutions to our pressing issues. He has a proven track record of creating positive change in the community he serves.

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