



Oregon Center on
Behavioral Health &
Justice Integration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mental Health Court honors participants with ‘Trooper of the Week’ award

Dallas — A unique participant incentive program has bloomed at the Polk County Mental Health Court.

Every week, the court gives out the “Trooper of the Week” award to a participant who has struggled within the court program, and yet prevailed during the same week.

The court includes other incentives for positive behavior throughout the course of the program donated by local businesses and community partners, such as flowers, coffee, pizza, and other items.

Cindy Thomas of Polk County Behavioral Health has been a staple of the program since its inception.

“I wanted participants to know that their efforts are being recognized and be rewarded for all their hard work. I met with several community partners that wanted to invest in our local programs and reward the participants for their accomplishments,” Thomas explained.

Participants may face significant life challenges, but the program rewards individuals for tackling issues head on.

“In the beginning, the participants struggle with life style changes, addictions, housing, family and friends. Participants learn to set and maintain boundaries. They also learn to trust others — as well ask for and accept help,” Thomas said.

“They learn to live a life of sobriety and that is no easy task for any of them. Additionally, the participants learn medication management and how to properly take medications as prescribed.”

Linda Taylor, owner of Heartstrings Florist & Artisans LLC, donates a bouquet every week for the award program.

“I firmly believe that people need to support each other in any way they can to make a difference in another person’s life,” Taylor said.

Staff from the Oregon Center on Behavioral Health and Justice Integration (OCBHJI) recently visited the mental health court and learned about its cross-sector endeavors.

“We were impressed with the team at Polk County Mental Health Court,” said Chris Thomas, Behavioral Health Justice Manager at OCBHJI. “Their work — including creative projects like this — underscores their collaboration with the community and their commitment to engaging participants in treatment while supporting public safety.”

The mental health court was developed in 2016 through a partnership among local criminal justice and behavioral health partners. The program serves individuals who have been charged with lower level crimes and exhibit symptoms of severe and persistent mental health conditions.

Services provided include pre-trial diversion, jail in-reach, intensive case management, therapy and groups.

At the court, Cindy Thomas sees the positive impact of recognizing individuals' achievements.

"The participants are worth investing in. They are an outstanding group of people," she said.

About OCBHJI

The Oregon Center on Behavioral Health and Justice Integration — started in 2017 — is a statewide program in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority to provide specialized training and technical assistance for behavioral health and justice partners to enhance knowledge and improve practices aimed at treating people who, primarily due to symptoms of serious behavioral health conditions, are at risk of becoming incarcerated or are already within the system.

For more information, please visit www.ocbhji.org.

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