**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**DAVID HANER**

Hello everyone and thank you for the opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to attend and complete this Veteran’s Treatment Court. There are several people present today, without whom my attendance in and transformation as a direct result of this program would not have been possible.... and I would like to be very clear.... without this treatment court, I honestly don’t know where I’d be today.... or **IF** I’d even “**be**.” The impact of the guidance and care I received and the insights and lessons I learned cannot be overstated, and for that I am truly grateful, and while I am tempted to admit that “Words can not express my gratitude,” I will do my best to share my thoughts and feelings.

(**Acknowledge the members of state, local, county, judiciary, law enforcement, etc**) There are many people at various levels of government and law enforcement that truly care about the mission and impact of this program. To these people, the Veterans Treatment Court and the people that attend do not simply represent “obligations” or “work.” As one who has been fortunate enough to participate in this program and in turn be educated and enlightened, I want to express my most sincere appreciation. To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. For \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who serve in the Department of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, your work with myself and my fellow court attendees (**? Please use correct terminology**) has taught us and supported us in ways none of us would have imagined when we entered this program. To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for the wisdom and insights that work to make this course so much more valuable. Each one of you has played a critical part in the formation of the program, the setting, acknowledging and maintaining its mission, and the opportunity provided to veterans to support them... **US**.... to transform behaviors and patterns that are detrimental to the health and safety of colleagues and community.

As I look back on my life and my experiences that led up to my participation in Veteran’s Treatment Court, it’s almost difficult to speak of what it was like for me as someone who lived my life on the “edge of acceptable society.” Actually, saying I “lived my life” is a stretch. I existed. That’s about it. I existed as an angry, depressed, marginalized, and ashamed individual. During my enlistment, I served for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Upon returning to civilian life after my enlistment in (**Name the year**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I struggled with depression and PTSD. For years I tried to deal with my conditions on my own and for years I was unsuccessful... to the point that, almost two years ago, I was involved in an incident and was arrested for assault. Thank goodness I behaved while I was enlisted in the service because due to my honorable discharge, I was eligible to enter the Veterans Treatment Court, and thank goodness, that is when my life began to change..... for the better. I had not been aware of the various mental health services available through the program, but fortunately they were and are! You can imagine that I was resistant to the process at first, but something inside me recognized the value of the treatment I was receiving and slowly but surely I “got it.” I discovered what was going on and how my awareness and attitude were transforming.... for the better. I saw that I was worthy of finding satisfaction, personal truths, and reckognizing my self worth. I realized what it meant to be a person capable of living life to the fullest and that is where I now choose to place my focus.

Someone once said, “Behavior is the mirror in which everyone shows their image.” I now see how my past behavior perpetuated an image that was angry, depressed, and ashamed. Thanks to this program, I am able to see and understand so many more facets and angles of what makes up the behavior of a person. Being enlightened to this has given me a choice and I am grateful to have a greater understanding of myself and in turn, of the behavior of others and how I respond. ... and while I know the future is bright, I also know that I have to be vigilant.... I .... **we** .... must pay attention, remain aware, and know that support is available when necessary.... and with awareness comes responsibility.... I know that I can now recognize when someone else needs moral or emotional support and I do what I can to share what I’ve learned.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the mentors and guides who so selflessly volunteer their time and humanity to really reach out to the veterans in this program. Each one of you has made an immeasurable impact on the lives of people who would have otherwise slipped through the cracks and remained in the margins of this community. (**Do you want to acknowledge any family members? Will any family be present? If so, you can say**). And finally, I want to express my deepest thanks to my family: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for being there, for trying to understand when what I was going through seemed impossible to comprehend, and for being patient. To all family members and to anyone close to people in this program, thank you for allowing us the space to learn and transform. Thank you all for believing in us even when it seemed impossible to believe. Thank you all!