



02 October 24

I would like to start off by saying I am so thankful for this program and for Judge Semon and the whole Veterans Court team. You are all phenomenal people.

I came into this program with an arrogant attitude thinking "why am I here?" "I didn't really do what I've been accused of doing" and "maybe I should just take this to trial". The first court date I almost did just that! I AM SO GLAD I DID NOT, that I decided to be in this program!

My life has changed so much, for the better! I can now look at myself in a mirror and genuinely smile, knowing I'm not the angry, arrogant person I was at the beginning (of the program).

It's all thanks to this program, through my therapy sessions I was really able to get to the root of why I was so angry. I learned how to properly channel said anger. I learned to NOT listen to the negative voices or to feed into the negative energy. I still have a long way to go but I come a very long way, too! I want my son to be able to proudly say, "that's my mom".

The best advice I could give to some one, who is just starting the program is to stick with it and don't give up! And don't listen to any negativity! Fill your life with things you love, positive things! If you do then I promise you, you'll end up graduating this program like I am, but you'll be a way more awesome person that can accomplish anything. Thank you!!!
Cynthia
United States Air Force
(veteran)

R.I

5/15/2023

Honorable Judge Thaddeus Semon
Judge of Tucson City Court - Regional Municipalities Veterans Treatment Court
103 E. Alameda St P.O. Box 27210
Tucson, Az 85725-7210

Re: Case # CM22023529

Dear Judge Semon,

First and foremost, my sincere thanks to everyone involved in the Veterans Treatment Court and to all who have served in the Armed Forces. Secondly, thank you for accepting me into the diversion program. The wrap-around services rendered have been beneficial to my mental health and I couldn't have asked for a better program to be in. Most importantly, thank you all for providing a treatment catered to me, that enabled me to find the glitch in my system.

From the first court appearance, I felt a comfortable familiarity, a sense of belonging, and greatly supported as I was told "you are not your mistake". Prior to this, my mind had been ruminating on the "should have" and "if only" thinking errors as well as feeling ashamed and embarrassed. I felt that I knew better but somehow still ended up here. Fast forward to now, I can most certainly say, without a doubt, that I won't find myself in this position ever again and that I will forever be a continued work in progress. All that I have learned from participating in the program have attributed to rediscovering my self-worth and pushing my confidence level back on its Wonder Woman status. I hadn't experienced that level since I graduated from bootcamp! In addition to feeling empowered, I've learned more appropriate ways to deal with difficult situations or people including: how to communicate assertively, how to establish and maintain boundaries, utilizing relaxation techniques, being self-aware, and knowing that my needs are also important. My boundaries are of the utmost importance to me because in the past, they have been altered by someone else or completely ignored, overstepped on in the past and I allowed it to happen repeatedly. I know now that my boundaries are mine and no one gets to tell me what is right for me and while I can make a request for change from someone else, I can't force it. In the end, it's up to me to decide what I need to do to take care of myself. Attending the groups gave me the opportunity to learn from others and share experiences which made me feel I wasn't alone. Having one-on-one with my therapist allowed me to be honest with myself without fear of judgment. The reading material and online videos I have received from my classes will be my future references. I am ready to move on from this experience.

In closing I would like to express my gratitude individually to the team. Thank you, your Honor, for your unwavering support, your words of encouragement, and treating me with the utmost

2/7/2023

I was introduced to Veterans Court through a series of unfortunate circumstances and bad decisions on my part, however, I truly enjoyed the experience. Veterans Court was very beneficial for me.

I attended 16 alcohol counseling classes, 12 parenting classes, and 26 domestic violence classes. I learned how to handle conflicts, dependency, and substance abuse, and how to focus more on my children to understand how my faults affect how they feel about me and how they perceive my love and care for them.

Becoming sober and dealing with that demon in my life was first and foremost throughout my time in Veterans Court. I realized that, as Judge Semon said, "alcohol is a liar." It isolated me from my wife, family, and friends. Alcohol had control of me for a very long time. I say "had" because I'm going on three months sober now. I have achieved this by focusing on my work, home, and children. My relationships with my children have improved considerably. Although my wife and I are still separated, our communication and relationship has also improved as we both have focused our attention on our children's needs and care. I really enjoyed the classes and interaction with the other members of each class group. It was refreshing to hear the various ways that other participants handle things such as conflict resolution, various parenting approaches, and how caring for your children and family is not enough, you also must take care of yourself. The Friday night dinners were enjoyable, and I plan to continue to attend as many as I can.

I would like to thank Judge Semon and the Veterans Court staff for your time and efforts, specifically Judge Semon, who has been very understanding, patient, and has given great advice when needed. I would also like to thank the Rally Point staff for their incredible support, advice, and guidance they have given me. Specifically Jim and his wife Jess, Engel, Alex, and all the staff at Rally Point, and La Frontera.

M. B.

because when you were going through something, you also found a way to get through it and still have time to meet with me. You are a rare beautiful soul. You have the desire to help us and be there, all I have to say you are God given. The program is blessed to have you, you are the gift. You are what mends it together. You are the chosen one. Okay, I'll stop with the Star Wars reference, but seriously. The way you showed support and always willing to help is incredible. I never felt judged by you when I would express myself. There was days I would come home from work and I would be so tired to hop on the meeting and I would just get on and it would always be so great to speak with you. I want you to know that you helped me in so many ways and I know I could not have done it without you. This would be a weird court letter if I told you girls I love you, but Jess and Kama, you are always in my heart. Thank you!

To Judge Semon, I know we only met on court dates and we didn't really talk much but during the times we did during court you were always so attentive and seemed to care about my well being. You were so genuine in getting any help we needed if we needed it. You always, always asked "Is there anything you need from us?" and I will never forget that. That means a lot. Thank you for always willing to help and giving us a chance to make things right, for listening to my story and for taking me in to the program. If it wasn't for you, I would not be where I am today. I would have not met all the incredible people you have in the program. I would not have had any opportunity to clear my name or even find help. Never did I think a program like this existed, but to my surprise it did. I appreciate you and all you do. Never did it go unnoticed. Thank you so much for everything.

To my attorney, thank you for staying alongside with me during the program and keeping me updated and informed with any information or court. Thank you for speaking for me at court and updating the judge as well, I appreciate all you do and all the hard work you did for me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to utilize your assistance during the program.

I hope this program continues to strive and only get better from here. The program has so much to offer us veterans. From counseling to finding help or assistance. A chance to better ourselves and choices we make in life and how to cope with the many struggles or addictions we have.

I would tell any newcomer that this program is real. It's genuine. Be receptive and help will be there if you allow it. Some people actually do care, even if they are strangers. What I can say is, that this program helped me more than my family did when I was at my lowest, and I couldn't comprehend how a bunch of strangers I did not know came together as a team and was willing to help me in any way they can, but they did. And that put a whole new perspective in my mind about people I did not know. Sometimes struggle recognizes struggle and pain recognizes pain. And that's what brings us together and why we are here together. It only gets better from here.

Respectfully,

Y. G.

Ashley
RMVCT Letter
17 October 2023

Throughout the past several years of my life, I have gone through highs and many lows. During my time participating in the Veteran's Treatment Court, I have experienced only highs. To my surprise, to what seemed to be a devastating event brought me to the experience I and my husband needed. I have learned so much about myself and have experienced more breakthroughs within the treatment than I have with any other program or therapy.

Through the program, not only did I gain effective coping and communication skills, but I gained insight on my fellow veterans and veteran supporters' lives. I quickly realized that I and others that have gone through this program share similar traumas, not only from the military, but our own personal narratives. Listening to my fellow veterans' stories gave me a better perception, gratitude and a sense of community where I didn't feel judged.

Through Lori Lewis and her "How to Get Away with Murder" team from University of Arizona, I felt protection and advocated for. Through Angel, Valentina, Alex and John, (Rally Point) and the "kind of cheesy" but free dinners, I got community, laughed a lot and felt so much admiration for the people around me. Through the mentorship, I got Amanda, a new genuine friend, homegirl and Tumamoc hiking partner. Through Judge Semon, I felt gentleness and understanding. His always positive attitude was what I needed this year. His encouraging words to me and others always left me feeling like I have more to give, and I can be better than yesterday. Go Air Force! Lastly, though the Center for Life Skills, I got Kama Garcia, the best therapist and chaos coordinator a human being could ask for. Since I was 12 years old, I have seen many therapists for different reasons and have always searched for someone who could help me reach a new level of understanding about myself and my life. With Kama, not only do I now understand and love myself so much more, but I have a new empathy and understanding for others and my husband. With Kama, I was able to unload everything without the feeling of being judged. On the days when I felt there was no way she could crack the code on what I was feeling, she effortlessly did while making me see a new perspective...like a magic wand. She helped me through the shame, resentment, anger and sadness that I felt earlier this year (even before my incident). Kama is priceless. I am forever grateful.

The advice that I would give a newcomer would be to let this program do what it does. With an open mind and heart, I promise you won't be the same person you were when you started. You can fully trust this program and its people with your darkest times. Really take it in and enjoy the people and experiences it has to offer.

When I first stepped through these doors. I felt nervous, anxious, scared, not knowing what was going to happen. That feeling did last quite some time. It wasn't until multiple of you spoke with me one on one and all told me to same thing, to relax and that everything was going to be fine. Standing up front in center always had me shaking. I felt like the spotlight was on me and was about to get the worst I could get, but it was the complete opposite. We had simple conversations about how my life has been going, hows the family, and if I needed any assistance to just ask away. Something that I wasn't expecting. Coming through these doors over and over, I began to notice this is more than a workspace. This is a family, a family that wants their brother and sister vets to continue to be successful in life. Being here in this program is the best thing that's happened to me. I was in a ruff path in life, but this program, Sandra from Bridges and my wife who stood by my side this whole time, helped me find and know my inner self and helped me remove my negative mindset. I've been able to finally set goals and life visions for myself. I go about my days less angry and more joyful. My family has seen me change for the better these past couple of months. I seen myself changed for the better!! This program saved my life and could save many more.

- Pedro

2023

How can Fighting with my husband, an alcohol problem and calling the police on myself ever turn into a good thing?

Well to be honest Calling the police not one, but two, times on myself. I know now it was an internal cry for help. A cry for help from my inner child begging to come out and face the demons I've repressed for most of my life.

Things I didn't even know that affected me have come out. They've come out in ugly cries, tears, laughter, long conversations, and most of all; forgiveness.

I have allowed myself to forgive those who have hurt my inner child. Including myself.

Those who have hurt me no longer hold power over me, because I am now and will forever be my own true authentic self. And I don't think I would have ever gained that true love for myself without this program.

It sounds so stupid and cliché but this really is what you make of it. You can sit there every week for an hour and just pass the time or you can choose to make the absolute most out of it. We are all here for a reason.

When I was first told I had to take Domestic Violence classes. In my head I initially thought that I didn't need to go to that, this wasn't my fault. But that was me putting the blame on someone else for something I needed to face.

And truly it's so much more than just domestic violence. It's about inner demons, childhood trauma, deployment trauma, PTSD. Figuring out why you are the way you are and learning to understand yourself, and give yourself grace.

So I made a choice. I can either continue down this destructive path and lose my whole life. or do something to really change myself. And so I chose to make the most of this.

I Served for 6 years active duty in the United States Air Force. People look at me when I say air force and make jokes. Most people look at me and don't see a .50 caliber machine gunner and they don't know that I have seen more combat than most marines. But that's okay. I had never opened up about my military experiences because I had disconnected myself from it.

There was three years where I was gone for more time than I was home. I am proud to say I served this country honorably.

And it left me scarred mentally.

But that does not mean I have to be a prisoner of my own mind.

I had detached myself from reality and became a hardened troop who wasn't allowed to be afraid. I had to protect my team.

Fear was not an option.

I was always hesitant for so long to get help because I was convinced it showed weakness. I was convinced my team would judge me. I repressed so much of my fear and anger from the military and my

childhood that it began to come out in destructive ways. Lies & deception. Binging. Purging. And Hurting those closest to me.

But I've learned it is actually more of a strength to be able to ask for help when you need it, rather than trying to take on the world by yourself.

I loved every single session with Stevin. Every Friday when his sound may or may not have worked.. we would have intense talks, but we also laughed and opened up about life and experiences. He showed me genuine kindness and respect and truly opened up conversations in my life that not only applied at home but everywhere. He helped me learn to create healthy boundaries, respect and to always know the difference between aggressive and assertive communication. He helped me truly learn so much about myself throughout these sessions. I am forever grateful.

I cherish my mentor and now my life long friend. She is there always with a sound mind and calming advice through any frustration or anxious situation I was in. I want to thank you Mia from the bottom of my heart for your kindness and your rawness.

I knew I could always call you or text you if I was feeling unsteady. And you were always honest, real and helped me see a different side of what I was facing.

From this program truly I am a more present wife, mother, sister, daughter and human being.. A passionate person who's not afraid to say no when it means taking care of my own mental health. Im not afraid to have strength in myself and be able to project that and allow no one to put me down. And I am not afraid to ask for help when I need it. I'm not afraid to talk about things in my past that have made me who I am.

I am truly now and forever more my most authentic self.

To the judge, my lawyers, my therapist, my VA psychiatrist, my husband, my family, my mentor and to the rest of the wonderful mentors in this program, and even the prosecutor, thank you for believing in me when I was truly at my lowest point. I am by no means a perfect person but isn't that what's so wonderful about life? Not being perfect and always being surprised by what's around the corner. For us, what's around the corner is heading to Macdill AFB, Tampa Bay.

I would never have felt as ready as I do without this program. So Thank you for the lessons. The freedom. The trust. The honor. And the never ending help offered to bring me back and help me build a ladder out of the hole of destruction I was in.

Thank you.

Justin

5/30/2024

Honorable Judge Semons
Tucson City Court
103 E. Alameda St.
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Judge Semons,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude and to share my personal experience with the Veterans Treatment Court Program. As a veteran, this program has had a profound impact on my life, and I believe it is important to convey just how valuable and transformative it has been for me.

Before entering the Veterans Treatment Court, I personally thought it was going to be a waste of my time, and was skeptical of the process. I am here today to tell you that is not the case. The program provided me with a structured, supportive environment where I could address the root causes of my issues and grow not only as a person, but as a father and husband. The comprehensive approach, which included regular court appearances, therapy sessions, and mentorship from a fellow veteran, was instrumental to opening my eyes on where I could improve my life.

One of the most significant aspects of the program was the sense of camaraderie and the adult life skills sessions. Casey was an amazing teacher and really helped me find some root problems I was facing as a husband and father. Like we discussed in the last court appearance, family is everything, and being present with the people that matter most is what is important.

The accountability measures, while challenging, were crucial in helping me maintain my progress. Regular drug testing, court check-ins, and the encouragement to set and achieve personal goals kept me focused and responsible for my actions. These elements have helped me increase my self-discipline and confidence to a whole new level.

I am deeply grateful to you, Judge Semons, Rally Point, and to the entire Veterans Treatment Court team for your dedication and commitment to helping veterans like myself. This program has given me a second look at my lifestyle, and I really appreciate the things that matter most to me, FAMILY. I hope that my experience can serve as a testament to the program's effectiveness and the profound difference it can make in the lives of veterans who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

To the next newcomer into the Veterans Treatment Court Program, I want to offer this advice: Embrace the journey ahead with an open mind and heart. The program's structure and support can feel challenging at times, but it's designed to help you rebuild your life. Lean on your fellow veterans, who understand your struggles and can offer invaluable support. Commit fully to the process, be honest with yourself and others, and take advantage of the resources provided. This program is a unique opportunity to transform your life—make the most of it.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Veterans Treatment Court for helping me become a better husband, father, and person. Through the program's support, I have learned to manage my challenges and rebuild my relationships with my family. The guidance and resources provided have not only aided my personal recovery but have also enabled me to be more present, responsible, and loving towards my loved ones. Thank you for giving me the tools and the second chance to transform my life for the better.

Respectfully,

Justin Williams