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Ross Mirkarimi
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In Recognition of National Recovery Month, Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi Tonight Hosts First Reel Recovery Film Festival at SF County Jail

San Francisco, CA – Underscoring his commitment to addressing the high numbers of San Francisco incarcerated men and women who struggle with substance misuse, San Francisco Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi, in cooperation with San Rafael-based Alcohol Justice, is hosting a first time, special edition of the REEL Recovery Film Festival at San Francisco jails.

“Substance abuse has become one of the many social problems relegated to the criminal justice system,” said Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi. “Instead of addiction being treated as a crime, it instead needs to be treated as a public health priority, combined with a recovery system available to all people, long before jail becomes the first resort.”

Nationally, about 70% of those incarcerated have a substance abuse problem. According to a 2014 survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in 2014, approximately 21.5 million Americans 12 or older had a substance abuse problem, including 17 million with an alcohol use disorder, 7.1 million with an illicit drug disorder and 2.6 million struggling with additions to both alcohol and drugs.

The special in-jail festival, which screens two films exploring addiction and recovery, launched tonight with a 5:00pm showing of Oscar-nominated documentarian Nicole Boxer’s film “How I Got Over,” at the women’s jail at County Jail #2. Ms. Boxer (daughter of Senator Barbara Boxer) who attended tonight’s screening, has said about the challenges faced by the 15 women featured in her film, “It made me think about the question, can art save your life?” The second and final screening of the festival will be Tio Hardiman’s autobiographical “The Death of an Addict: The Tio Hardiman Story (2010).” Both films will be shown to audiences of county jail inmates and their substance abuse treatment providers.

"We are grateful to Sheriff Mirkarimi and his staff for allowing us to bring the REEL Recovery Film Festival - Bay Area Edition into the San Francisco Jail System," said Michael Scippa, public affairs director at Alcohol Justice. "We believe that by engaging audience members with honest stories about substance misuse, as well as the hope

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and opportunity for recovery, they will be able to make better choices to lead more productive lives."

The San Francisco Sheriff's Department addresses the crisis of drug and alcohol, use among San Francisco's incarcerated population by providing robust in-custody substance abuse treatment in partnership with community non-profits like HealthRIGHT 360. The programs include Roads to Recovery (ROADS), a substance abuse treatment program for men offering reentry life skills, participation in recovery process groups, and individual counseling, Sisters In Sober Treatment Empowered in Recovery (SISTER), a substance abuse treatment and behavior modification program for women with intensive programming, case management, re-entry planning, and drug treatment program referrals, and Keys to Change, a program of SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School, that focuses on an individual's capacity to change the behaviors that led them to incarceration through daily process groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

For inmates on the wait list for these programs (as of September 10, 2015, ninety two in-custody inmates were waiting to join one of SFSD's substance abuse programs), or for inmates who are focusing on their studies through the Five Keys Charter High School and in-custody community college, and inmates focusing on violence or veterans-related issues, substance abuse treatment is provided by dozens of volunteers through in-custody twelve-step programs. Where approved by the court, SFSD works to transport people with substance abuse issues, who have been sentenced to jail, to residential treatment in the community.

Since 1987, Alcohol Justice has been at the forefront of the battle against drug and alcohol abuse in the Bay Area by advocating policy amendments and mobilizing the community progressively in the direction of change. Their national REEL Recovery Film Festival features films that highlight alcohol and drug addiction and recovery.

Film synopses:

"How I Got Over," Documentary by Nicole Boxer. Screens at County Jail #2 on 9/14/15. Follows 15 formerly homeless women as they craft an original play based on their harrowing true-life stories to be is performed one-night only at The Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

"Death of an Addict: The Tio Hardiman Story (2010)," Autobiographical film by Tio Hardiman. Screens at County Jail #5 on 9/16/15. Chronicles the filmmaker's struggle to understand and break the cycle of intergenerational drug addiction in his family and neighborhood.

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