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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE/UPDATED

FROM LIVING OUTDOORS TO GIVING BACK: DRUG COURT PARTICIPANT LAUNCHES “WARM FOR THE WINTER” COMMUNITY PROJECT

H.O.P.E. Drug Court participant Merrill Ball turns his own experience into hope for people working to rebuild their lives

ROSEBURG, Ore. — August 10, 2026 — Having once experienced life without stable housing himself, H.O.P.E. Drug Court participant Merrill Ball knows firsthand how much a warm coat, a blanket and a helping hand can mean to someone who is struggling.

Now, as he reaches the graduation phase of the H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program, Ball is using his required community project as an opportunity to give back to the community that helped him rebuild his own life.

His project, **“Warm for the Winter — Helping Those in Need,”** is collecting new and gently used winter essentials for adults in need throughout the Douglas County community.

“I have been there and just want people to know it gets better and to keep your head up and moving forward,” Ball said.

Ball’s message comes from personal experience. His journey has required strength, resilience and a willingness to make significant changes. He credits his turnaround in large part to the combination of treatment, wraparound services, community support and the structure and accountability provided through the H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program. For Ball, Warm for the Winter is about more than collecting coats and blankets. It is about reminding people who may currently be struggling that their circumstances do not have to define their future.

RECOVERY TAKES MORE THAN ONE SERVICE

Drug Court is designed to address the issues that often contribute to continued involvement in the criminal justice system by combining accountability with treatment, supervision and support.

Recovery and long-term stability rarely happen through one service alone. Participants may need substance use treatment, mental and behavioral health support, stable housing, transportation, employment assistance, medical care, peer support and other resources as they work to rebuild their lives.

The H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program works alongside treatment providers, community organizations and other local partners to help participants address those barriers while building the skills and stability necessary for long-term success.

The goal extends beyond sobriety. It is helping individuals establish healthier lives, strengthen relationships, find and maintain employment, secure stable housing, reconnect with their communities and develop the tools needed to continue moving forward. Ball's story is an example of what can happen when personal determination is met with accountability, treatment and a community willing to provide support.

Now, he wants to provide some of that support to others.

WARM FOR THE WINTER DONATION DRIVE

Community members are encouraged to donate:

- New or gently used adult coats — all sizes
- Throw blankets
- New socks
- Gloves
- Hand warmers
- Simple hygiene items

Donations will be collected **through September 11, 2026.**

DROP-OFF BOX LOCATIONS

Clint Newell Motors

1481 NE Stephens Street
Roseburg

Big O Tires

2545 NE Stewart Parkway
Roseburg

MEET MERRILL AT ROSEBURG GROCERY OUTLET

Ball will also be outside **Roseburg Grocery Outlet** accepting donations and talking with community members on the following dates:

~~**Tuesday, August 11** — 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. (Removed due to a court meeting)~~

Tuesday, August 18 — 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 25 — 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 1 — 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Roseburg Grocery Outlet is located at 780 NW Garden Valley Blvd., Suite 150.

A PROJECT ROOTED IN HOPE

Warm for the Winter represents the larger purpose behind community projects completed through the H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program: giving participants an opportunity to recognize their own growth while making a positive contribution to the community.

For Ball, the project brings his journey full circle.

He understands what it feels like to live outdoors, to face uncertainty and to need help getting back on your feet. Today, he is using that experience to help ensure someone else has a coat, blanket, pair of gloves or other basic necessity items when winter arrives.

His message to others is simple: keep going.

With treatment, accountability, wraparound services, community resources and people willing to help, change is possible.

And sometimes, one person's recovery can become another person's reason to have hope. Ball will be handing out items during a Connecting Point location on September 17 and proving the South River Medical Center with any leftover items to hand out at their discretion.

ABOUT H.O.P.E. DRUG COURT

The H.O.P.E. Drug Court Program uses a collaborative treatment court approach that combines judicial accountability, substance use disorder treatment, supervision, incentives, support services and community partnerships. The program works to address barriers that can contribute to continued justice-system involvement while helping participants develop the stability, skills and support necessary to maintain recovery and build productive lives in the community.

Community members are also invited to attend the 114th H.O.P.E. Drug Court Graduation on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 5:15 p.m. The ceremony will be held at the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Cascade Hall.

The graduation ceremony recognizes participants who have worked diligently to overcome challenges, maintain their recovery and successfully complete the requirements of the H.O.P.E. Drug Court program. The community is encouraged to attend, celebrate the graduates and hear about the accomplishments, perseverance and hard work that brought them to this important milestone.

For more information or to contribute, community members are encouraged to participate in the listed event. Graduate flyers and additional information about the H.O.P.E. Drug Court program are available through the Douglas County website via the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) at: <https://douglascountyor.gov/851/HOPE-Drug-Court>

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