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For Immediate Release

Female Veteran a Courageous ‘Voice for Recovery’ for September

As a U.S. Army veteran, 45-year-old Danielle Ferrell knew what it meant to have courage. People who serve in the military have it in abundance. That courage played a key role in helping her overcome her own personal battle with addiction.

Ferrell is one of Oklahoma’s “Voices of Recovery” for “Recovery Month,” a national observance held every September to educate Americans that appropriate treatment and services can help those with mental and substance use disorders live healthy and rewarding lives. This year’s theme is, “Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Are Stronger.”

After losing custody of her daughter over last year’s Labor Day weekend, due to substance use, Ferrell sought treatment at The Virtue Center in Norman, a contract facility of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The Virtue Center is one of numerous community based treatment facilities across Oklahoma contracted to deliver life-saving care and recovery.

“Recovery takes courage because it requires changing everything about your life and it’s a lifelong commitment,” said Teresa Collado, executive director of The Virtue Center. “It’s not only about the time you spend in a treatment program. Addiction is a brain disease, and there’s still a lot of stigma and shame around that, and there should not be. People who seek treatment are still faced with the reality that not everyone understands this disease like they would something like heart disease or diabetes.”

Ferrell said she came from a “good family” (her parents have been married 50 years), has a college degree (bachelor’s from Cameron University in business administration), spent four years in active duty in the U.S. Army and two years in the National Guard, but, “The reality of this disease is that it doesn’t pick and choose who it affects or kills, whether the addiction is to alcohol, illegal drugs or prescription drugs.”

Like many, her addiction issues began with prescription painkillers. A bad knee injury that occurred during basic training, which went untreated for years, finally became too much to bear when Ferrell was 41. “I had a full knee replacement at 41, which is super young for a full replacement,” she said. “I became addicted to prescription drugs while recovering from surgery.”

Although Ferrell said she knew she could seek services through the Veterans Administration, she received all the services she needed at The Virtue Center. With support from a 12-step organization, Ferrell has been substance-free since Oct. 26, 2018.

At Christmas, Ferrell hopes to be officially reunited with her 13-year-old daughter, who is currently staying with one of Ferrell’s two sisters in Pennsylvania. She also has been reinstated into the “good graces” of her parents, who now want her close to them and included at every family event.

“My family relationships have been restored, and I’m very grateful for that,” she said.

“The Virtue Center provides a beacon of light in this community,” she added. “I’m so thankful it has provided me – and lets others know – that there’s a way out of addiction and, ‘There’s light and a future and hope for you.’”

The Virtue Center, 215 W. Linn St. in Norman, serves a diverse clientele from adolescents through geriatrics, as well as self-referred, state-referred and drug court clients, Collado said. Services include Individual and Group Counseling, Family Counseling, DUI services, Education, Intensive Outpatient Therapy and an Employee Assistance Program.

The center also works collaboratively with Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center, the Children’s Recovery Center, Norman Public Schools and United Way of Norman.

“We love what we do here,” Collado said. “It’s about the people. Helping families to become reunited, people getting their educations and becoming productive citizens of this community is really an investment and it’s a smart investment in people.”

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The Virtue Center offers a full range of treatment services for substance abuse, problem and compulsive gambling, and related mental health conditions. For additional information about how to access services or questions about treatment, contact The Virtue Center at (405) 321-0022 or visit thevirtuecenter.org. You may also call 211 or 1-800-522-9054 to find additional links to services, or visit odmhsas.org for a statewide list of certified treatment providers.