



Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court
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“Veterans Treatment Court Honors First Graduate”

(Cleveland) – When Judge Michael E. Jackson ran for his seat on the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, one of his primary goals was to establish a Veterans Treatment Court (VTC).

The Judge, a Marine Vietnam veteran himself, has now shaken the hand of the Court’s first VTC graduate.

Keith Hewitt successfully completed the one year program and was planning to graduate with the first full VTC class on September 29, but he’d promised to assist an out-of-state family member at that time. Judge Jackson agreed to allow Hewitt to graduate early, and a brief ceremony was held in courtroom 15-D of the Justice Center on Thursday, August 11.

Hewitt was presented with a certificate of graduation, and a special American flag dog tag with the VTC information on the back.

“I am so proud of Mr. Hewitt,” says Judge Jackson. “And I am equally proud of the entire group of veterans who will graduate next month. They’ve taken responsibility for what they did wrong, and have taken the necessary steps to begin putting those actions behind them.”

The Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court Judges approved the VTC specialized docket in 2014 and Judge Jackson was appointed to the docket by Administrative and Presiding Judge John J. Russo. The VTC officially started on June 1, 2015.

The mission driving the Veterans Treatment Court is to successfully rehabilitate veterans by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice system and providing them with the unique tools they need to lead a more productive and law-abiding life. They are also provided with a mentor, a fellow veteran who understands their military experiences.

Many veterans have serious readjustment issues when they return home from their service, particularly combat veterans. The most serious of those issues include engaging in high risk conduct, unemployment, post-traumatic stress syndrome, traumatic brain injuries, homelessness, drugs, and crime. Studies have shown that 18% to 30% of veterans need treatment for these issues. The Veterans Treatment Court addresses these issues.