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NEWS RELEASE

Judge Jackson presides over final Veterans Treatment Court ceremony



Cleveland: 11 veterans successfully finished the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) program and were awarded certificates of completion on Thursday, December 13.

This was the final ceremony for Judge Michael E. Jackson, who will retire from the bench next month. Judge Jackson addressed the VTC graduates, volunteers, and team members, and told them how proud we were to be the first judge for the Cuyahoga County specialty docket.

"I look forward to this court developing in new ways, in better ways," Judge Jackson concluded to the packed courtroom. Judge Jackson, a Vietnam combat veteran who was awarded five personal medals for valor and a Purple Heart while serving as a Marine lieutenant, also thanked his fellow Judges for approving the specialty docket, which began in 2015.

Under Judge Jackson's leadership, more than 60 veterans have completed the VTC and about 100 veterans are participating in the program which seeks 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.

Also speaking was Ohio Supreme Court Justice Sharon Kennedy, an outspoken supporter of the Veterans Treatment Courts. Justice Kennedy thanked the veterans for their service and encouraged them to reach out to other veterans who may find themselves in need.

At the end of the ceremony, it was announced that Administrative and Presiding Judge John J. Russo would be taking over the VTC docket upon Judge Jackson's retirement.

Judge Russo thanked Judge Jackson for his service to our nation and to the people of Cuyahoga County, "The best part of taking over this docket is that I have the outstanding template created by Judge Jackson and his team to follow."

Judge Russo's father, Charles F. Russo, served under General George S. Patton in World War II and eventually became head of the Cuyahoga County Soldier's Relief Commission, which helped veterans seeking services. Judge Russo called this an opportunity to honor his father's service, and said that he looked forward to walking side-by-side with veterans as they continue to move through the VTC program.

At the conclusion of the program, a dozen boxes and bags of unwrapped, new toys donated by Court employees, the public and VTC participants were collected by a member of the U.S. Marine Corps for their Toys For Tots program.

