



Eighth Judicial Circuit of Florida

For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT GRADUATION

On Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015, at 3:15 p.m., the Alachua County Veterans Treatment Court Program, presided over by Circuit Court Judge Phillip A. Pena, will hold the inaugural Veterans Treatment Court graduation ceremony in Courtroom 4A of the Alachua County Family and Civil Justice Center.

The first Veterans Treatment Court was established in Buffalo, New York in 2008. This specialty court was established to better focus on U.S. veterans and the issues they often face with associated military disorders such as post traumatic stress disorder, brain trauma or substance abuse. Veterans Court allows participating veterans the opportunity to address these issues in a forum that best understands their special needs and that has access to various treatment alternatives.

Veterans Treatment Court in Alachua County was established primarily based upon the strong support and efforts of Senator Rob Bradley. Senator Bradley played an essential role in allocating recurring funding in the state budget for Veterans Courts in Alachua, Clay, Duval, Okaloosa, Orange, Pasco and Pinellas Counties. Without his help and support, the Eighth Judicial Circuit would be unable to fund its Veterans Court. "Florida is home to many veterans. Unfortunately, some suffer from mental health and substance abuse issues that developed during their service. When these issues lead them down the wrong path, it's appropriate to give them a helping hand. The Veteran's Court program does just that and I'm pleased that we now have a program for veterans in this circuit. It gives these deserving people the tools they need to get back on the right path," said Senator Bradley.

The first court event was held in November of 2013. In the last fifteen months, the Veterans Treatment Court Program has continued to grow. Through the collaboration and efforts of many, including but not limited to: Court Administration for the Eighth Judicial Circuit; the State Attorney's Office; Office of the Public Defender; Alachua County Court Services; the Veterans Health Administration, and Meridian Behavioral Health Services, the necessary structure and services have been and will continue to be provided to the participating veterans.