

Dear Veteran,

Congratulations on your acceptance for participation in the West Michigan Regional Veteran Treatment Court. This court, the counties of Allegan and Van Buren, the state of Michigan and the Veterans Administration are collaborating and partnering to provide you with specific treatment counseling and mentoring to help you succeed in this court program. By doing so you will be entitled to the benefit of the plea arrangement that you agreed upon as well as provided with ongoing assessments for mental and physical health needs. We will also make sure that you are familiar with resources to address needs for employment, education, and housing. We will team you with mentors that are veterans as well and hopefully instill within you a desire to serve as a mentor yourself to some future veteran participants.

I will be honest with you and expect honesty and commitment from you in return. Very often the most grievous offenses brought to my attention are attempts at deception and lies. As the presiding judge I am only a single voice on a team that is committed to enabling you to succeed and to do the work necessary to achieve that success.

In the spirit of forthright disclosure I will inform you that I am not a veteran. My commitment to the men and women in this court stems from the pride in the service of my brothers John and Patrick, Vietnam War veterans, and that of my nephew Mark an active duty Marine who has served multiple deployments in OIF and OEF. I will not pretend to understand your combat experience or trauma but I do want to understand what can best be done to help you to successfully engage the services you need to recover and succeed in civilian life.

We make no promise to "make things the way they were." We cannot make the past disappear. But we will do our best to help you make your future bright and to be productive members of our community. Speaking on behalf of our team I want you to know that we believe in you and your ability to succeed, graduate and become the full measure of yourself.

Welcome to the West Michigan Veterans Treatment Court.

-Judge William Bailargeon,
Presiding Judge of WMRVTC