

The Journal Gazette

(/)

JGLOCAL (/NEWS/LOCAL)

Friday, November 10, 2017 1:00 am

Veterans court graduates 12

Program combines accountability, treatment for vets

DAVE GONG | The Journal Gazette

Twelve men and women, all military veterans, graduated from the Joint Veterans Court of the Allen Circuit and Superior courts on Thursday.

"I am living with the horrors of war, but through the program's love and support, I feel like I really have a chance at succeeding," Army veteran Russell Jones said after receiving his diploma and unit challenge coin from Allen Superior Court Judge Fran Gull.

Thursday's ceremony celebrated the completion of a program designed to connect veterans suffering from substance abuse or mental health disorders with benefits and treatment. Court officials say the program reduces correctional costs, protects the community and improves public welfare. The program combines treatment and accountability for veterans facing jail or prison time from charges related to substance abuse or mental health issues.

Including Thursday's class, 38 veterans have graduated from the program.

Speaking to the crowded courtroom, Mayor Tom Henry, who was this year's keynote speaker, discussed his experience with the Army military police, as well as his own brother's struggle and death at the hands of drugs.

"Back then there wasn't a lot of treatment for men and women who thought taking drugs was a way to forget the situation they were in," Henry said. "1971, '72, '73 were tough times for this country. If you got out (of the military), for the most part you were on your own."

Henry said he wished a program like the Veterans Treatment Court existed back then. He could sleep comfortably at night knowing that his fellow soldiers were being taken care of. His brother might even still be alive, he said.

Speaking to the graduates, Gull made it clear the future is theirs to mold.

"Your objective now is to firmly plant yourselves as great American citizens," Gull said. "And do not retreat."

dgong@jg.net (mailto:dgong@jg.net)

Copyright © 2017 www.journalgazette.net

600 W. Main Street

Fort Wayne IN 46802

[Terms of use and privacy policy \(/terms-of-use/\)](/terms-of-use/)

[Site map \(/site-index/\)](/site-index/)