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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
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Date of Release: April 20, 2018
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HONORS VETERAN'S COURT MENTORS

Today, in honor of National Volunteer Week, the twelve Veterans Treatment and Assistance Court (VTAC) mentors were honored with handmade quilts by Quilts of Valor, a non-profit organization whose mission is to cover service members and veterans touched by war with comforting and healing quilts. VTAC is a collaboration of numerous agencies and partners that include: the 19th Judicial, Adult Probation Services, the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, the Public's Defender's Office, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, and many others.

"Our volunteer mentors are the priceless connection between the stress and trauma of war and the complexities of readjusting to civilian life and navigating the court process. The shared experiences of combat and service in our armed forces and reintegration is more difficult than anyone realizes. Our veteran mentors are invaluable to our clients; they really are a doorway to a healthier life," said Judge Christopher R. Stride.

VTAC is non-adversarial specialty court, where veterans sign a petition indicating a willingness to complete the program. Justice-involved veterans are assigned veteran mentors because it is more likely that they will respond positively to someone with shared or similar experiences. The accepted veterans have individualized case and treatment services setup promptly with collaborating partners. The mentors provide an active and supportive relationship to the justice-involved veterans; the lasting effects improve chances for sobriety, stability, and law-abiding behavior. Supervision of the cases are conducted by Adult Probation Services, with hearings held every Friday in front of the Judge Christopher R. Stride or Judge Christen L. Bishop.

"In my 34 years as a probation officer I cannot think of a more inspirational experience than the time I've spent working with our VTAC mentoring program. The mentor's commitment to community, especially their justice-involved brothers and sisters, has been unlike anything I have been a part of. Any person willing to put their life on the line for Country distinguishes themselves from most people in our community. This is a special group of people we have here in Lake County, and it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of what they contribute, for the betterment of us all," said Rudy Martin, Director of VTAC Mentor Coordination. For more information on how to become a VTAC mentor, please contact Rudy Martin 847-377-3964.

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