

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
CIRCUIT COURT  
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

**JANET R.HOLMGREN**  
Presiding Judge  
Problem-Solving Courts Division

**JOHN T. GIBBONS**  
Presiding Judge  
Veterans Court



**WINNEBAGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
ROOM 215  
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61101**  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**WINNEBAGO COUNTY VETERANS' COURT PROGRAM  
CELEBRATES 16th GRADUATION CEREMONY**

**Rockford, Illinois** – The 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Veterans' Court is celebrating its sixteenth graduation ceremony on Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 217 of the Winnebago County Courthouse. The Presiding Veterans' Court Judge, John T. Gibbons, will be recognizing the graduates and their achievements during the ceremony.

The Veterans' Court is a specialized Problem-Solving Court for justice involved veterans who are eligible for VA benefits. The program is voluntary and targets all aspects of the reasons why the participants have found themselves to be involved in the criminal justice system. This Problem-Solving Court program is unique in that veterans are able to participate in the court with pending and post plea charges. Veterans in the program receive case management provided by a Veteran's Justice Outreach Specialist who works through the Department of Veteran's Affairs in Madison, WI. Through the program, veterans are linked with a variety of treatment services available through Veteran's Affairs in Rockford and in Madison, WI including drug and alcohol treatment as well as mental health treatment. Veterans also receive services from the Resource Intervention Center and Community based services.

The ultimate goal and purpose of the Veterans' Court is to offer an opportunity for veterans involved in the criminal justice system to achieve stability and recovery in order to lead meaningful and more productive lives while minimizing the adverse impact of the Veteran's criminal record on employment and education opportunities.

Please feel free to contact Emily Behnke for more information about the Veterans' Court program and the sixteenth graduation. Cameras will be allowed in the courtroom with prior approval. Please contact Emily if you would like to have a camera in the courtroom so that parameters can be covered. Interviews can also be arranged upon request. Judge Gibbons is available to speak to the press following the Graduation Ceremony.