

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90073
Phone: 1-310-268-3340
www.losangeles.va.gov



PRESS RELEASE

November 7, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michiko Riley, Public Affairs
(310) 478.3711 ext 49947
Michiko.riley@va.gov

Santa Barbara County/Santa Maria Veterans Court Host First Graduation Ceremony

LOS ANGELES – Five Santa Maria area Veterans who faced possible incarceration graduate from Veterans Court on Nov. 14 at 2:00 pm in the Santa Maria Courthouse after enrolling and successfully completing VA treatment programs.

“We are here to provide our Nation’s Veterans with the best healthcare in a patient-centered care environment and we are extremely proud of our Veterans for successfully completing the Veterans Court Program,” said Donna Beiter, Director VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLA). “The Court acknowledges the service of our Veterans and provides them with an opportunity to address their legal matters while addressing their healthcare needs.”

The Santa Barbara County/ Santa Maria Veterans Court offers injured Veterans with treatment under the condition they take responsibility for their actions and safely transition back to a peaceful, functional and healthy civilian life. The Court, in collaboration with the GLA, guides Veterans through a phased program that includes mental health care, residential and outpatient treatment, self-help meetings and regular court-review hearings.

“It is truly a humbling experience for me to have been asked to preside over our new Veteran’s Treatment Court in Santa Maria,” said Judge Rogelio Flores, Superior Court of California, Santa Barbara County. “Too many of our nation’s veterans are suffering from any number of symptoms directly related to their service to this country, including mental disorders, homelessness and substance abuse. Our court is designed to help these heroes return to a more productive and healthy lifestyle.”

GLA programs generally last 12 to 18-months and include residential treatment at New Directions and Salvation Army Haven along with housing assistance through Housing and Urban Development/VA Supportive Housing and Grant Per Diem Programs. Upon completion of the residential programs, Veterans receive outpatient care, at the Santa Maria VA Community-based Outpatient Clinic.

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“Veterans in the Santa Maria Veterans Treatment Court have taken responsibility for their Legal difficulties and have taken the steps necessary to address issues that prevented them from returning to their communities as positive, proud Veterans,” said Suzanne Dolan, LCSW Justice Outreach Program Coordinator for GLA.

Veterans, whose charges ranged from drug possession and petty theft associated with substance abuse, receive graduation certificates after completing the program from the presiding judge and a second chance.

Defendants eligible for Veterans court are United States military Veterans who served in a combat theatre and committed a criminal offense that maybe linked to mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder or addiction problems tied to their service.

“It is an honor to be a part of the Veterans Justice Outreach program under the umbrella of our Nations Department of Veterans affairs,” said Dolan, “In addressing the Veterans health Care and Mental Health needs, you get to say thank you to the men and women who so bravely served our Country.”

About the VA GLAHS: VA GLAHS is the largest, most complex healthcare system within the Department of Veterans Affairs. GLA consists of three ambulatory care centers, a tertiary care facility, and seven outpatient clinics. GLA serves Veterans residing throughout five counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, Kern, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. There are 1.4 million Veterans in the GLA service area. Visit us on the web for more information www.losangeles.va.gov

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