

The Veterans in the Courts Initiative

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Veterans WrapAround Project

Overview

"In my small person world, 3 young men that I dearly love have returned from a horrible war only to fight the battle at home. It is a long process to return to life after seeing the horrors of war. . . . How many more are there out there that need help? That's what this court is all about to me A chance to make a difference in the life of one who so selflessly offered their own to us."

—A Mother's Story, page 2

Ohio currently has an estimated 900,000 veterans, the sixth highest population of veterans in the nation. In 2006, Ohio veterans received \$2.5 billion in benefits from the Veterans Administration Agency. In August 2008, Governor Ted Strickland created the Ohio Department of Veteran's Services. Several small agencies and commissions were merged into the new department. By 2012, Ohio veterans had received \$5.8 billion in benefits. Ohio now receives an average of \$6,400 in federal funds per veteran and ranks 4th in the country in total benefits received in the U.S. In a time of reduced services and local funding cuts, every veteran that can be identified and connected to federal benefits enables a resource rich vein of services to be tapped and frees up scarce local dollars for other defendants.

There are a large number of veterans returning from service overseas who suffer from mental illnesses and substance abuse due to war-related incidents. Despite the many state, federal, and non-profit resources for veterans, few know what is available. Consequently, while I was serving as a Justice on the Ohio Supreme Court, I developed the Veterans WrapAround Project, a network of care and resources to help veterans who are in the criminal justice system. I use a bullseye visual to aid in understanding the players who need to be involved in wrapping our arms around our veterans.

The first circle of the WrapAround Project represents a veteran's initial contact in the criminal justice system as a defendant. Once identified as a veteran, the second or middle circle connects the veteran with state and federal resources that the veteran needs. The last or outer circle is the volunteer component whereby courts establish a mentoring program involving volunteer mentors who are veterans or active-duty soldiers who will help the recovering veteran transition back to society, since veterans respond more favorably to other veterans. Second, pro bono lawyers will receive special training to help the veterans (as well as active military) with a variety of legal issues, whether it be government disability determinations, probate and estate planning, family law matters, creditor/debtor concerns, or other civil issues.

Our veterans have given so much to our country. In return, we need to "wrap our arms" around them in their time of need. We need to "connect the dots" – bring all the players together to make sure that we take care of our veterans.

This story was written by Cheryl DeBow, who was a probation officer in the Youngstown, Ohio Municipal Court. She read her story at the opening of the Youngstown Veterans Treatment Court and has given us permission to share her story.

"A Mother's Story"

by Cheryl DeBow

I would first like to thank Judge Milich for providing this opportunity to the veterans of this area. It is because of his hard work that this vision has become a reality.

My name is Cheryl DeBow. I am the mother of 3 sons and a daughter. Shortly after 9/11, my oldest son, Mike, came to me and said, "Mom, after what just happened, I just can't stand by and do nothing. I am joining the Army." In the blink of an eye, Mike was in Iraq. Later, my middle son, Ryan, came to me and told me that he was following in his big brother's footsteps and joining the military. He was enlisting with his best friend, Steve. Mike returned from Iraq. Ryan and Steve received orders stating that they were going to Iraq.

When Mike was discharged and returned home from the Army, he was an empty shell of the person he once was. When I picked him up at the airport, his body was slightly trembling and he was hyper-vigilant. It was as though he didn't even see me. It has been 7 years of fighting for my son's life, inclusive of heavy drugs, alcohol, anger, aggression, confusion, and pain. It has only been in the last year that he began to return to the son I once knew and loved.

Ryan returned from the military after spending a year in Iraq. He seemed fine at first; not nearly as affected as Mike. It was very deceiving. Steve had also returned from Iraq. Both received injuries from two separate explosions. Steve began to show serious problems in dealing with the memories of war. Steve received his Purple Heart last year. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested for possession of drugs. Around the same time, Ryan also began to show serious problems. I would try to talk to him and all he could say was, "Mom, you don't know what is going on in my head. You couldn't understand." His anxiety level became so high that he couldn't stand to be next to you because he couldn't stand to hear the sound of your breathing. He would go days and days without being able to sleep. He began to get speeding tickets one right after another. He made a video of himself tossing and turning in bed, unable to sleep, watching a blank TV screen, perfectly portraying his inner struggles. He posted it on YouTube. He became a tortured soul. He began to self medicate with drugs.

In April, Ryan came to me and was extremely distraught. Steve had overdosed and was on life support. He could no longer live with the pain of war. Ryan was devastated. Ryan asked me to pray for Steve. After 11 days, Steve had improved and was taken off life support. When he was well enough, he was transferred to the drug and alcohol unit.

On May 22, 2010, 7 months ago, the police came to my door. It was a beautiful sunny day. The officer said the words that I never thought I would hear. They said, "I am

sorry to inform you that your son Ryan Alexander Yurchison has passed away." Ryan had told friends the night before that he didn't want to live anymore. My world stood still. It was surreal. My son is gone forever. I will never get to hug him, laugh with him, or try to help him again. His chance is over. Steve was released from the hospital long enough to be a pallbearer at Ryan's funeral. Steve knew that Ryan had been working at getting his Purple Heart before he passed away. As Steve leaned over Ryan's casket, I saw him reach into his pocket. He pulled out his own Purple Heart and pinned it on Ryan's uniform. A few minutes later, the casket was closed. I will never look upon his face again.

I have been a probation officer for 10 years. I have worked with both felonies and misdemeanors. I have worked with drug court and mental health court. Six years ago, shortly after Mike returned home, I began seeing the need for a Veteran's Treatment Court. . . . If someone has drug problems, they can apply for drug court. If someone has mental health issues, they can apply for mental health court. In Youngstown, we also have slip court for those who are 1st time Driving under Suspension offenders. I questioned why there shouldn't be a court for our returning heroes. The heroes that fought for our freedom. Sacrificing mind and body. That is where my dream for a Veteran's Court began and my journey to fulfill that dream began.

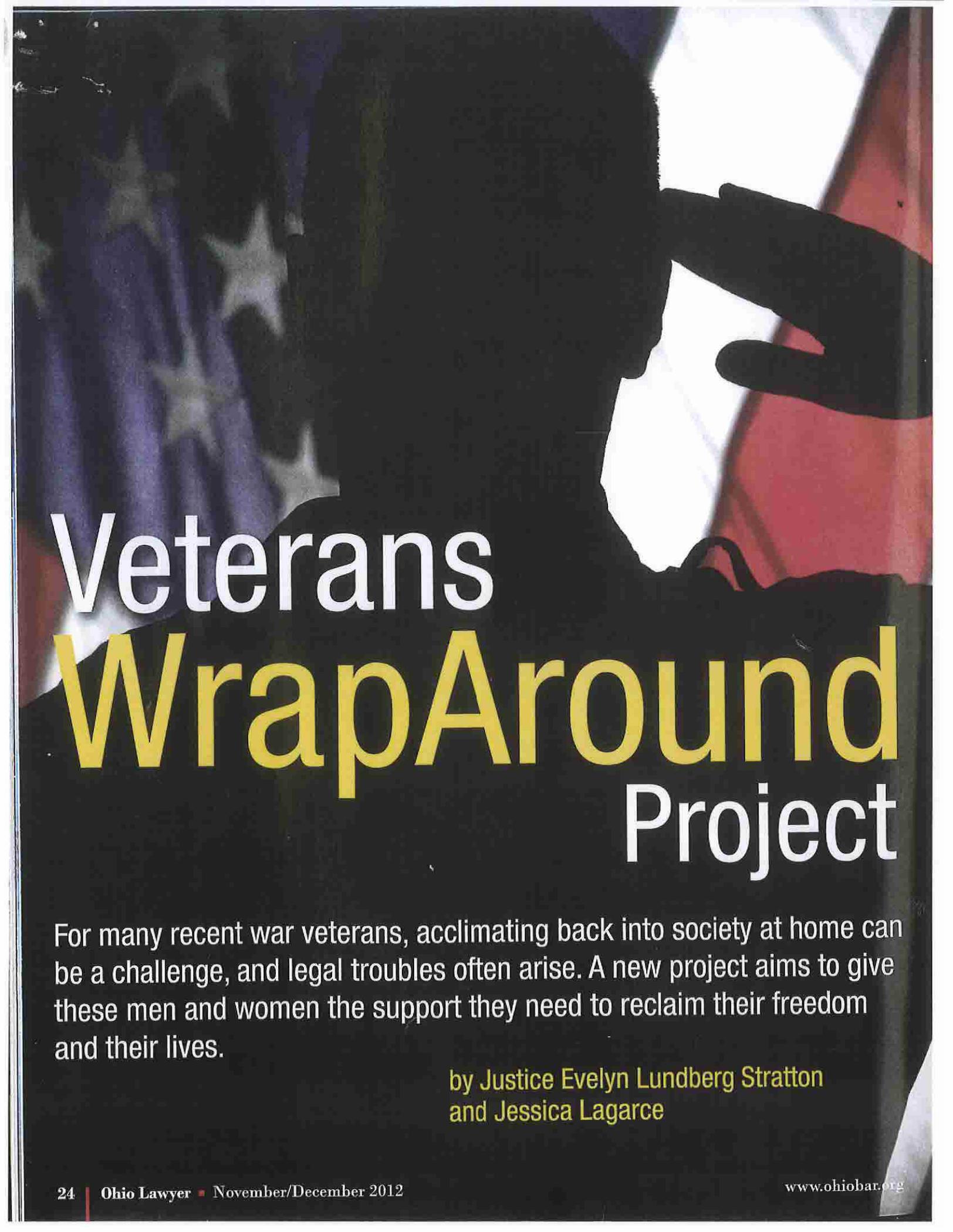
In my small personal world, 3 young men that I dearly love have returned from a horrible war only to fight the battle at home. It is a long process to return to life after seeing the horrors of war. It is filled with numerous relapses and breakdowns. My oldest son Mike, represents a daily 7 year struggle that might or might not be successful. My middle son, Ryan represents one who survived the war in Iraq only to return and lose his battle for life at home. Steve, who represents one who is currently involved in the court system with a very long road ahead of him, but still has a chance. 3 young men in my small personal world, one struggling to live, one who almost died, and one that did die. I know of 3. How many more are there out there that need help? That's what this court is all about to me.

A chance to step up where others don't.

A chance to intervene when family members can't.

A chance to offer help to those that are unaware they need it.

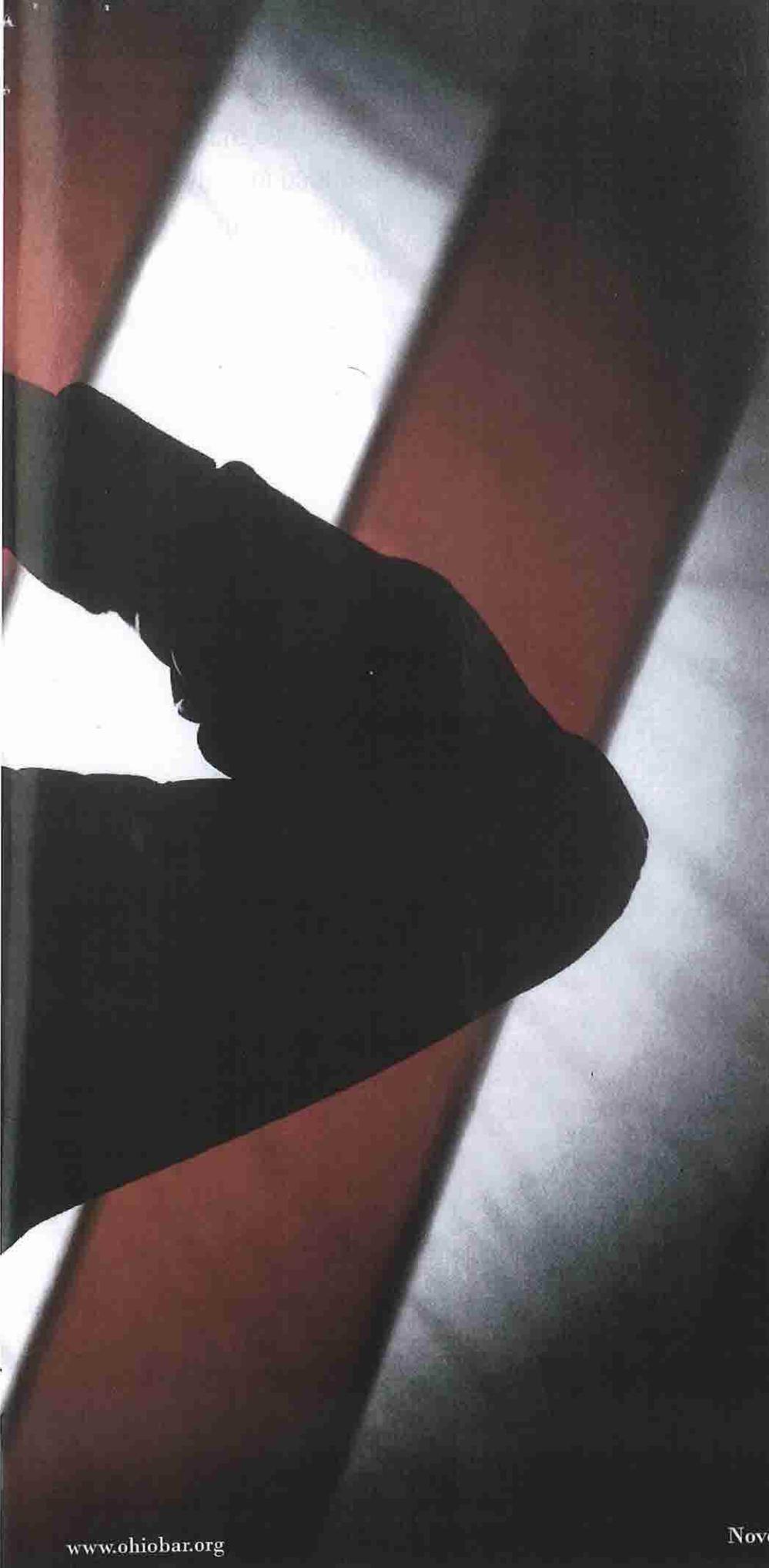
A chance to make a difference in the life of one who so selflessly offered their own to us.



Veterans WrapAround Project

For many recent war veterans, acclimating back into society at home can be a challenge, and legal troubles often arise. A new project aims to give these men and women the support they need to reclaim their freedom and their lives.

by Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton
and Jessica Lagarce



“WrapAround” service is a common phrase used in the drug, alcohol and mental health fields, where you “wrap” targeted services around a client with specific issues. The goal of the “Veterans WrapAround Project” is to wrap services around our active military and veterans in their time of need. Active military face many issues on deployment or return from service—family crises, debt management and leases for items of no use during deployment. Veterans may enter the criminal justice system with mental health and drug abuse issues stemming from war-related incidents. There are many resources available on all of these fronts, but they are fragmented, unconnected and sometimes difficult to find or access. To break the cycle, we need the court system, as well as the federal, state and local systems, to work together. A previous article that appeared in the March/April *Ohio Lawyer* magazine focused on veterans’ treatment courts, but this article will focus on the many resources available to veterans involved in the court system.¹

A few years ago, I was appointed to a committee set up by the Veterans Administration (VA) to help create the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program, which assigns a VJO specialist to each medical center to work with the courts and jails in efforts to help veteran defendants access treatment and other services.² The first thing I learned when we developed the VJO program was that most judges were not asking defendants about their military experience. We also learned that we should not ask defendants if they are “a veteran,” but instead ask if they have “military experience.” This is true for a variety of reasons. First, often women will not self-identify as veterans. Second, sometimes veterans may not believe they qualify because they did not serve in combat. Finally, some veterans think that a veteran status may be perceived as negative, especially if he or she served during the Vietnam War era. The challenge is getting the courts to reframe and ask that question.

To help improve the lives of veterans in the criminal justice system, and to organize the many different resources available to a veteran once identified in the Ohio court system, I developed a management tool that I call the Veterans WrapAround Project. I use a bullseye visual to assist in understanding all of the players that need to be involved in wrapping our arms around our veterans.



The first circle: The criminal justice system

The first, or inner, circle of the Wrap-Around Project represents a veteran's initial contact in the criminal justice system as a defendant. Often that first encounter is with a police officer—so we are expanding training efforts. Crisis intervention training (CIT) trains officers and others on handling incidents with people in crisis, especially those with mental health issues. Now there is a separate CIT training for handling incidents involving veterans.

The court must then identify those defendants as veterans whom the arresting officer may not have identified—through intakes at arraignment, with the defense attorney or the public defender asking the question. Many probation officers are now using a series of questions about military background in presentence investigations (PSIs). The goal is for all probation officers

to include these questions in their PSIs. Ohio has also launched the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS)—a tool used by judges for evaluating risk at the time of sentencing. The ORAS has added a screen on military background, so judges and probation officers can examine the risk of having a veteran in their system.

Judges are encouraged to use a specialized docket model—the veterans' treatment court—because it is more efficient to combine resources, and judges have learned that veteran defendants often have unique issues caused by their military experience.³ We worked with the Ohio Judicial Conference and the Ohio State Bar Association to refine a guide (developed by Thomas M. Cooley Law School and attorneys from Honigan Miller Swartz and Cohn LLP), to teach the judges and lawyers about federal laws regarding the rights and protections of active military, specifically found in the Servicemembers

“Our veterans have given much to keep our country safe. Sometimes they come back, wounded in body and spirit. We must wrap our arms around our veterans and help them heal. We owe it to them for their sacrifices for us.”

Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton,
Supreme Court of Ohio

Civil Relief Act (SCRA), as well as Ohio laws and procedure.⁴ Further, the Supreme Court of Ohio has recently adopted new forms to be used upon application for appointment of a guardian. These require disclosure of whether the ward has any military background, as many extra benefits may be available for that ward.

When you have several defendants in court in one day, the goal is to accomplish as much as possible for the veterans on that day in court. Ideally, a VJO specialist can bring a computer to that courtroom to determine the veterans' discharge status and corresponding services to which they are entitled. Based on that information, the VJO specialist can make appointments for veterans on the spot during the court proceedings. Scheduling all veterans on the same day enables the system to maximize efficiency of scale and resources.

State and federal resources

The Veterans Service Commission (VSC) offers emergency help such as subsidies for rent, food and medical bills to veterans, active military and their families. There are VSC officers in each county appointed to help veterans apply for federal, state and local benefits.⁵ Ohio law mandates that common pleas judges make these appointments.⁶ Many judges do not realize that it is their duty to appoint VSC officers.⁷ I must admit that I was a trial judge for seven years, and I do not remember appointing a VSC officer because I was unaware of that statutory duty. A committee has now put together guide-

Veterans WrapAround Project



1. Criminal Justice System

- Courts
- Prosecutors
- Defense Counsel
- Probation Officers
- Law Enforcement

2. Resources - State

- Ohio Department of Veterans Services
- Adjutant General - Ohio Cares
- Individual Agency Programs
- Jobs for Vets
- Attorney General's Program
- Veterans Services Commissions
- Ohio Benefit Bank
- Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation

3. Resources - Federal

- Veterans Health Administration
- Veterans Benefits Administration
- Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists
- VBA Homeless/Incarcerated Veteran Outreach Coordinators

4. Volunteers - Pro Bono Attorneys

- Legal Aid Societies
- Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation
- Bar Association Committees

5. Volunteers - Peer Mentors

- Veterans Associations (Vietnam Veterans of America and similar organizations)
- Volunteer Veterans

lines that encourage judges to interview their VSC officers and swear them in publicly in front of all the other VSC officers and the public. Judges have the corresponding power to remove VSC officers; so judges should obtain performance reports on their county's VSC officers. The appointment of qualified VSC officers is a serious responsibility for judges. Guidelines to help judges understand these duties and best practices now appear on the Judicial Conference website under the section "Tools and Bench Aids."⁸

The Supreme Court was asked to consider the temporary admission to the practice of law in Ohio for spouses of veterans or active military, a procedure now recommended by the American Bar Association, the Ohio Women's Bar Association and other groups. Further, the Court has adopted a rule to allow more judge advocate general (JAG) officers to represent active military in Ohio because active military often do not qualify for legal aid due to income restrictions, but cannot otherwise afford to hire a private attorney.

Once a criminal defendant is identified as a veteran, the second, or middle, circle connects him or her with needed state and federal resources. There are a wealth of services in all areas available to veterans, but one sometimes really has to search to find them. The Ohio Attorney General's Office pro-

vides information on services for veterans and active military.⁹ Many state departments and agencies offer programs for veterans as well. Key resources include the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Department of Job and Family Services, Veterans Service Commissions, Rehabilitation Service Commission (RSC) and Ohio Cares.¹⁰ Additionally, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides a broad range of federal services for veterans, including a wide variety of health-care benefits and financial assistance.¹¹ There are also many federal job assistance websites for veterans.¹² One of the best resources is StateSide Legal, an easy-to-use website for active military members, veterans and their families to help them access benefits and find free legal aid.¹³

Many nonprofit organizations work on veterans' issues, such as AMVETS, the Salvation Army and veterans associations and foundations.¹⁴ For example, I recently joined the board of the Resurrecting Lives Foundation, which focuses on public awareness, diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury (TBI), one of the signature wounds of recent wars. Research shows that many veterans are being misdiagnosed with post traumatic stress injury (PTSI), but TBI is a physical injury to the brain, which requires complex treatment, including cognitive retraining.¹⁵

A new resource is the Veterans Courts and Military Affairs (VCMA) subcommittee of the Ohio Attorney General Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness (Task Force). In June 2011, the attorney general invited me to join him in chairing a task force on criminal justice and mental illness. We formed 10 active subcommittees, one being the VCMA subcommittee, co-chaired by Tammy Puff, North Central Ohio regional director and director of Veterans Outreach for the office of the attorney general, and Judge Robert P. Milich of the Youngstown Municipal Veterans' Treatment Court. We now have a statewide committee to focus on veterans' courts.

One of its first proposals is an addition to Ohio's sentencing statutes to require consideration of military experience in sentencing (already required in the federal sentencing guidelines). For information on how to join the VCMA subcommittee of the Task Force, please contact Amy O'Grady, Deputy Director of Professional Standards at the Ohio Attorney General's Office.¹⁶ If you would like to be added to the VCMA email "Listserve," which gives news and information on Veterans Treatment Courts and resources, please contact Pete Miller, VCMA subcommittee member, who is the Veterans Treatment Court Listserve Moderator and a retired vice president of Grimes Aerospace Company.¹⁷

Volunteers: Pro bono attorneys and peer mentors

The last, or outer, circle is the volunteer component, where courts establish a mentoring program to help the recovering veteran transition back to society. The mentors will be volunteer veterans or active-duty servicemembers because we have learned that veterans respond more favorably to other veterans.

Pro bono lawyers will receive special training to help the veterans and active military servicemembers with a variety of legal issues. The OSBA Military and Veterans Affairs Committee is assisting with developing a group of pro bono attorneys to wrap services around the civil needs of veterans. They represent veterans with government disability determinations, probate and estate planning, child custody matters, loan issues, creditor/debtor concerns and other civil issues. Further, there are a number of legal aid agencies and bar associations in Ohio that provide free or low-cost assistance to veterans.¹⁸ We have formed a committee to coordinate the pro bono project, called the Ohio Military and Veterans Legal Assistance Project that will be unveiled in more detail in our next article.

Wrapping up

We have so many resources available to help our active military, reservists and veterans. It is a big circle. Now we need to connect the dots to help our service members—from our Vietnam veterans all the way to the current recruits—by truly wrapping our arms around them. ■

Author bios



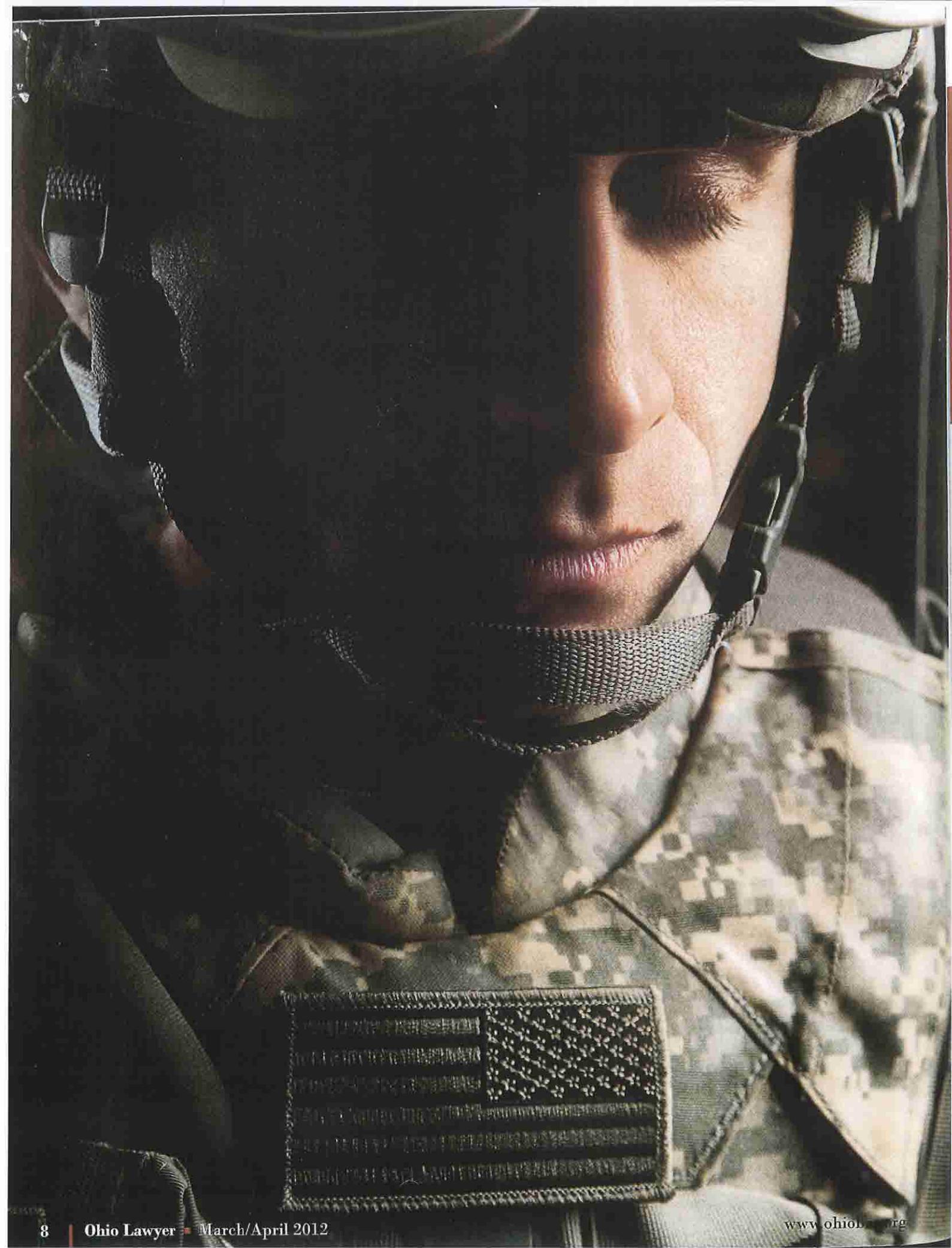
Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, former trial judge for seven years, and justice for 16, is the daughter of American missionaries and was born and raised in Thailand. She works on state and national reforms in adoption law and with veterans and persons with mental illness in the criminal justice system.



Jessica Lagarce served as an extern to Justice Stratton while a student at Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Lagarce was admitted to the Ohio bar in May 2012 and is employed as Legal Counsel for Columbus Hospitality Management.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton and Jessica Lagarce, "Restoring Honor Inside Veterans' Courts," *Ohio Lawyer*, March/April 2012, at 9.
- ² There are currently 11 VJO specialists in Ohio assigned to five VA medical centers. For a list of all VJO Specialists in Ohio, see U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Justice Outreach Contacts, www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO_Contacts.asp (last updated July 18, 2012).
- ³ See Stratton and Lagarce, supra note 1.
- ⁴ There are many rules that judges are unfamiliar with because they arise so infrequently. For example, the SCRA limits the impact of default judgments on service members and sets forth a procedure for obtaining a stay of proceedings due to military service obligations. See 50 U.S.C. App. §§520-22 and §524. The SCRA also protects service members from mortgage foreclosures and lien enforcement when military service has affected the service member's ability to pay debt or when a creditor does not follow certain procedures. See 50 U.S.C. App. §533 (Mortgages and trust deeds) and §537 (Enforcement of storage liens). See also §527 (limiting the maximum interest rate on loans obtained before military service to 6 percent); §535 (allowing servicemembers to terminate residential and motor vehicle leases that cannot be used due to military service obligations); and §535(a) (expanding servicemember ability to terminate phone service contracts).
- ⁵ See State Veterans Affairs Commission, County Veterans Service Officer List, available at www.vab.ms.gov/files/csolist.pdf [hereinafter, VSC OFFICERS LIST], for a list of VSC officers in every Ohio county.
- ⁶ R.C. §5901 (2000).
- ⁷ Id. ("... the commission shall be composed of five residents of the county appointed to five-year terms by a judge of the court of common pleas.")
- ⁸ www.ohiojudges.org (follow "Tools and Bench Aids" hyperlink; then follow "Veterans Service Commission Appointment Guidelines" hyperlink) (last visited Oct. 16, 2012).
- ⁹ Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, Services for Military and Veterans, www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/ServicesforVeterans.
- ¹⁰ Ohio Department of Veterans Services, Veterans Benefits, www.dvs.ohio.gov; Department of Job & Family Services, Veterans Services, www.jfs.ohio.gov/veterans; see VSC OFFICERS LIST, supra note 5; Access to Care, Resources Available during the Deployment Cycle, www.ohiocares.ohio.gov (follow "Access to Care" hyperlink) (providing behavioral health resources for veterans, active military, and their families pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment, as well as information on how to cope with the transition back to society).
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Services, www.va.gov/landing2_vetsrv.htm; see id. at www.va.gov/health/default.asp. For a complete list of each Ohio medical center, clinic, and veteran center location and contact, see U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Admin., www2.va.gov/directory; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Admin., Veterans Benefits, www.vba.va.gov/VBA (offering a wide variety of benefits such as vocational training, pensions, loans, and life insurance).
- ¹² The U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment Training Service (VETS), offers training and employment services to veterans through a "Jobs for Veterans State Grants" Program. The grant funds two main staff positions: Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER). The DVOP specialists focus on the employment needs of veterans (focusing on the homeless and those with low education levels), while the LVERs work with employers to increase the hiring of veterans. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services currently have 72 LVERs. To locate a LVER in your county, see <http://jfs.ohio.gov/veterans/locate/index.stm>.
- ¹³ Stateside Legal, <http://statesidelegal.org>.
- ¹⁴ AMVETS, National Service Foundation, www.amvetsnsf.org; The Salvation Army, www.salvationarmyusa.org.
- ¹⁵ Resurrecting Lives, Traumatic Brain Injury Research, Treatment, Advocacy, Education, <http://resurrectinglives.org>.
- ¹⁶ Amy can be reached at her office, (740) 845-2683, or email, Amy.O'Grady@OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov.
- ¹⁷ Pete can be reached at (614) 284-8563, or his email, cruzzen@gmail.com.
- ¹⁸ For list of relevant Ohio legal aid agencies and bar associations, see www.olrs.ohio.gov/legal-aid-agencies (last visited Oct. 16, 2012).



RESTORING HONOR

by Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton
and Jessica Lagarce

INSIDE VETERANS' COURTS

Post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression and other mental issues resulting from warfare are a major factor in the growing crime problem among some of our nation's returning soldiers. A new kind of court aims to provide healing, support and second chances to deserving war veterans.

With approximately 900,000 veterans, Ohio has the sixth largest population of veterans among the 50 states.¹ Many of these veterans suffer from serious mental illnesses and substance abuse issues resulting from their military service. Several have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. Consequently, many veterans end up homeless, unemployed, suicidal and disconnected from family, friends and communities. Some veterans may engage in domestic violence or self-medicate with drugs as a means of avoiding or denying that they might have a problem. Others may begin stealing to support their drug habits. Veterans who suffer problems as a result of their military service may act out and behave differently, and many end up in the criminal justice system without the resources and support they need to survive.

Introducing the veterans' treatment court

A few years ago, I was introduced to the concept of a veterans' treatment court, which is a hybrid between a drug court

and mental health court that focuses on veterans. Because many veterans in the criminal justice system had no criminal history before their tour of duty, a veterans' treatment court tries to address the reasons why a veteran has entered the criminal justice system and to identify and provide the means for the veteran to use the many resources available.

Modeled after the first veterans' treatment court, established in 2008 by Judge Robert Russell in Buffalo, N.Y., these courts seek to substitute "a treatment problem-solving model for traditional court processing" for criminal defendants who are veterans with substance dependency and mental illnesses.² These courts distinguish between those veterans who had a criminal history before their military service and those who have entered the criminal justice system since completing their military service. Some veterans have come back completely changed due to repeated exposures to death, danger and concussions of the brain from improvised explosive devices or other explosions. A veteran charged with a

misdemeanor or nonviolent felony offense generally is eligible to participate in this specialized docket. Some programs also accept veterans who have been charged with violent felonies if the veteran has a problem that can be clearly traced to the veteran's military service.

Helping veterans through the process

Once veterans in the criminal justice system are identified through evidence-based screening and assessments, referral to the veterans' treatment court may be made by a probation officer, public defender, defense lawyer, judge or a veteran's justice outreach specialist (VJO)—whose sole job is to link veteran defendants with the Veterans Affairs services that they need.³ The court establishes a team to help the veteran through this process, which includes court staff, probation officers and health care providers.

The court provides the veteran the opportunity to participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan with a team of specialists instead of incarceration. On successful completion of the specific cri-



teria in their treatment plan, many veteran defendants will have their charges dismissed while others may avoid a jail or prison term. Other veterans volunteer as mentors in the veterans' treatment courts to work with the veteran defendants throughout their treatment. This relationship promotes and fosters a "can do" attitude in the veteran, encouraging him or her to accomplish treatment goals. It also reinforces the fact that the veterans are not alone and that the mentors are there for them.

Courts assisting veterans with mental health care, substance abuse treatment and more

A unique aspect of a veterans' treatment court is that the VA has a multitude of services to assist a veteran defendant, including mental health care, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, assistance with physical health needs, housing and employment—resources that are often reduced or lacking at the local level. The veteran can be linked to these federal services by a Veterans Service Commission (VSC) officer or the VJO specialist in the veteran's county of residence.⁴

Veterans' treatment courts help criminal defendants who are veterans deal with trauma and help restore some measure of mental health. It is important to note that these courts do not excuse the veterans for committing the criminal offenses. Often, veterans' treatment courts have a more stringent probationary period, including random drug and alcohol testing, and will divert the veterans who fail to abide by the terms of probation to the regular docket. These courts also collaborate with the VSC in each county and with the VA so that the defendants may take advantage of the many resources they provide.

Ohio's veterans' courts

Ohio currently has six veterans' treatment courts: Cleveland Municipal Court; Hamilton County Common Pleas Court; Mansfield Municipal Court; Middletown Municipal Court; Stark County Common Pleas Court; and Youngstown Municipal Court. Many other judges in Ohio, both municipal and common pleas, are in the planning stages of establishing a veterans' treatment court, while others have expressed an interest, including courts in Akron, Dayton and Toledo. Butler, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Hamilton, Marion and Stark counties have also expressed interest.

These numbers continue to grow. The Supreme Court of Ohio urges all specialty dockets to become certified. Current veterans' treatment courts in Ohio are either in the process of or have already become certified. Beginning in January 2013, all Ohio specialty dockets will be required to meet uniform procedural standards to be on the Supreme Court of Ohio's approved specialty dockets list, although they may continue to operate without that status.⁵

Allowing veterans to heal

A veterans' treatment court involves everyone from probation officers, crisis intervention teams, law enforcement, healthcare providers and the VA, to veteran volunteer mentors, treatment staff and pro bono attorneys, all working together to determine why veterans end up in the criminal justice system, break the cycle and make sure that they are able to heal. ■

Author bios



Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, former trial judge for seven years, and justice for 16, is the daughter of American missionaries and was born and raised in Thai-

land. She works on state and national reforms in adoption law and with veterans and persons with mental illness in the criminal justice system.



Jessica Lagarce served as an extern to Justice Stratton while a student at Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Lagarce earned her juris doctorate in January 2012.

Endnotes

- ¹ Press Release, Department of Veterans Services, ODVS Director Completes Visits to all 88 County Veterans Service Offices (Oct. 25, 2011), available at <http://dvs.ohio.gov/Portals/0/library/odvs/news/CVSOVisits-release.pdf>.
- ² Buffalo Veteran's Court: Mentoring and Veterans Hospital Program Policy and Procedure Manual, 2 (2010), available at http://ejfi.org/PDF/Russell_ver_court_manual.pdf.
- ³ Id; For a list of all VJO specialists in Ohio, see U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Justice Outreach Contacts, www.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO_Contacts.asp (last updated Dec. 2, 2011).
- ⁴ There are VSC officers in each county appointed to help veterans apply for federal, state and local benefits. For a list of VSC officers in Ohio, see State Veterans Affairs Commission, County Veterans Service Officer List, www.vab.ms.gov/files/csolist.pdf (last revised July 12, 2011); see Veterans Justice Outreach Contacts, *supra* note 3.
- ⁵ Sup. R. 36.02 (describing 12 uniform standards for certification and operation of specialty dockets). For more information on establishing a veterans' treatment court, visit the Specialized Docket Section on the Supreme Court of Ohio website, www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/specDockets/veterans/.

"When you enter the United States Marine Corps, a warrior mentality is drilled into your young mind. During times of war, an emphasis on making a killer out of each marine is priority As soon as you get good and brainwashed, they send you to war with all the proper killing equipment to take life, after life, for the sake of American freedom. Then you fulfill your part and fight for America above and beyond the call of duty, taking lives to save your own. Then you find out when your time in the marines is over and you gave every bit of your soul to your country, they send you home with no formal training to bring you back to normal or back to the way you were before molded into a killer marine. They just make you into a killer and then toss you into society with little chance of survival." ■

[Letter from a former Marine criminal defendant in Clinton County Court (2010).]

"In my small person world, three young men that I dearly love have returned from a horrible war only to fight the battle at home. It is a long process to return to life after seeing the horrors of war How many more are there out there that need help? That's what this court is all about to me ... a chance to make a difference in the life of one who so selflessly offered their own to us." ■

[Cheryl DeBow, "A Mother's Story," available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6ZtKE564BQ (last visited Dec. 6, 2011). Cheryl DeBow, mother of two veterans, composed a letter to the Supreme Court of Ohio requesting a court that considers the effects of war on veterans and its impact on attempts to transition back into civilian life when returning home.]

VETERANS COURTS - A BETTER WAY TO HELP OUR VETERANS: A TALE OF TWO SOLDIERS

JUDGE JERRY E. AULT
MANSFIELD MUNICIPAL COURT

TALE ONE:

Wayne McMahon was arrested six months after the Marines discharged him. A Marine from 2001 to 2006, he spent his last year working as an aircraft mechanic on a flight line in Afghanistan. His base was under near constant attack. For most of that year, his days and nights were spent up close and personal with the evidence of what the weapons of war do to human bodies. He learned to cope by drinking home-made alcohol and was dishonorably discharged when he was caught drinking on duty a few days before his five year contract ended. Jumped by a gang in his hometown of Albany, New York, he went for an assault rifle he kept in the back of his SUV. He ended up in the court system. McMahon was sentenced to three years. He was not diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) until after he was incarcerated.

TALE TWO:

Gary Pettengill planned on an Army career. Pettengill, a Buffalo, New York resident, was 23, married with two children and one on the way. While serving in Iraq in 2006, he hurt his back and was forced to take a medical discharge. Pettengill started smoking marijuana to cope with nightmares and sleepless nights. Unable to work full time due to this back injury, he began selling marijuana to pay his bills. He was eventually arrested during a drug sweep. Pettengill never went to prison.

THE DIFFERENCE?

Certainly the disparity in the crimes committed may explain why one was imprisoned and the other received probation. A better explanation is that Pettengill entered Judge Robert Russell's

Veterans Court in Buffalo, New York. He was subsequently diagnosed with PTSD and received services that treated his symptoms. Pettengill is convinced that his diagnosis and subsequent treatment prevented his suicide.

Anyone who has paid any attention to the plight of our returning veterans has heard these stories or other like them.

THE RETURNING VET PROBLEM

In 2008, the Rand Corporation estimated that 300,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will suffer from PTSD, and 320,000 others will suffer Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) that has many of the same symptoms as PTSD. These symptoms include sleeplessness, exaggerated startle response, violent outbursts and a reliance on combat skills that are inappropriate and often illegal in the civilian world. Many of these veterans will self medicate with illicit drugs or alcohol, resulting in further legal problems. Some will commit suicide.

THE VETERANS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

In May 2009, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a system wide effort to ensure access to services for the "justice involved veterans population" at risk for homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, and physical health problems. The VA defines a "justice involved veteran" as one in contact with law enforcement who can be diverted into treatment, a veteran in jail awaiting trial, or serving a sentence, or a veteran involved in adjudication or monitoring by a court.

The VA directed each VA Medical Center (154) to designate a Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialist who will be responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management for justice involved veterans in the local courts and jails. The VJO Specialists will liaison with local justice system partners and provide or coordinate training for law enforcement personnel. In other words, the VJO Specialists will connect local courts with the vast and rather difficult to navigate VA system.

OHIO'S RESPONSE

On October 16, 2009, Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton convened the 2009 Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative to explore collaboration between Ohio courts and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This initiative, which I attended, was the culmination of Justice Stratton's two years of work with the VA. Attendees included the heads of the Ohio Department's of Rehabilitation and Correction; Mental Health; and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services; Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray; Director Bill Harnett of the recently created Ohio Department of Veterans Services; Ohio Adjutant General Greg Wayt; a number of VA representatives and several Judges. The five VJO Specialists assigned to Ohio were introduced to the group.

WHY SUPPORT VETERANS COURTS?

With the recognition that many of our veterans return to civilian life with serious trauma, both physical and mental, which may lead to their involvement with the criminal justice system, comes a civic and humane responsibility.

Continued on next page...

We must work to ensure that veterans will receive the treatment they need to transition from life as a warrior to life as a civilian. It is time we take a stand to support our troops, not only in word, but also in deed.

Veterans Courts, which operate similarly to Mental Health or Drug Courts, or which in fact, may be a “track” on an existing specialized docket, help deal with the unique psychological and medical issues facing returning veterans. In a Veterans Court setting, we can identify whether the veteran’s problem is related to combat stress, what resources are available to treat those issues, and whether the defendant can qualify for VA services at a time when our state and local resources have been cut. We can train our probation staff on these issues and set up contacts with our local VJO Specialists.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

As Ohio Courts vary widely in their use of specialized dockets, so too will a Veterans Court structure fit local needs.

In Mansfield, where we considered adding a track to several specialized dockets, we studied and determined that a separate docket was justified, as we have over fifty veterans a year on community control. A separate docket will allow the veterans to increase their chances of success in a collaborative environment. The local VA clinic will send a clinical social worker to our sessions, and we hope to recruit “peer specialists” – other veterans who can be buddies and help the veteran’s transition back into society.

In the Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Judge Michael Sage conducted a similar study and determined that there were an insufficient number of veterans on community control to justify funding a separate position in their

adult probation department. Based on his study, Judge Sage opted for a direct liaison person in the Veterans Service Commission office who serves as a counselor to whom the Common Pleas Judges refer defendants for veteran’s services.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

One reason to connect with the VJO Specialists is the greatly increased federal funding available for housing, medication and mental health treatment for returning veterans. This also frees local dollars for other defendants in our courts.

Other funding sources are available:

1. The Special Projects Fund – which the Municipal Court can establish under O.R.C. 1901.26. We are using this fund in Mansfield to hire a Veterans Court Probation Officer. (O.R.C. 2303.201 & 1907.24 apply to Common Pleas and County Courts)
2. Probation Supervision Fees – which a Municipal or Common Pleas Court can establish under O.R.C. 2951.021 of up to \$50 a month for supervision services on an offender under community control sanctions.
3. Grants – the Office of Criminal Justice Services within the Ohio Department of Public Safety annually coordinates the distribution of monies from various grants, including the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.
4. Veterans Service Commission Funds – each county collects .5 mil of the property tax to fund Veterans Service Commissions to provide services to veterans.

Judge Sage conducted extensive research into how these monies are expended. He has prepared a breakdown by county as to the amounts of money collected and expended on veterans’ services. His research reveals that in 2008, 121 million dollars were collected statewide and only 57.7 million dollars were actually expended on veterans’ services. The unspent money is subsequently returned to each county’s general fund. Judge Sage further notes that under Ohio law, the Common Pleas Court appoints five commissioners who serve on the Veterans Service Commission, giving considerable leverage to Common Pleas Court Judges to ensure veterans services are provided at an appropriate level.

OHIO CAN LEAD THE WAY

I believe this progressive approach will have a positive impact on society by not only helping those afflicted, but by saving countless dollars by decreasing recidivism within the criminal justice system. As a 21-year Richland County Assistant Prosecutor, I spent years arguing for prison terms for people that I now consider may have been better served by treatment.

As Justice Stratton stated, this is a work in progress. Judges in Ohio have demonstrated national leadership in the treatment of the mentally ill in the criminal justice system. Using the established mental health courts as a guide, Justice Stratton’s Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative affords us the opportunity to lead the nation in the just treatment of veterans. As we have learned, smarter sentencing saves money. It may also save lives.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Sue Bowery, Administrative Assistant to Justice Stratton on Veterans’ Issues:
sue.bowery@sc.ohio.gov

The Effects of PTSD & TBI on Lawyer Discipline

Summary of *Butler County Bar Assn. v. Minamyler*
129 Ohio St.3d 433, 2011-Ohio-3642

This case involves the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) on the behavior of a Navy veteran lawyer, resulting in disciplinary charges. Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, while still a Justice, wrote a concurring opinion that lays out the medical and legal challenges created by injuries incurred in combat. Minamyler, while serving in the Navy Reserve Judge Advocate General's Corps, suffered a head injury and loss of consciousness when a helicopter he was a passenger in made a crash landing on a naval vessel in the Indian Ocean.

Originally diagnosed with PTSD and depression, Minamyler received treatment, but then later became involved in Ohio's attorney disciplinary system. Shortly before his final appeal to the Supreme Court of Ohio, he sought treatment at the Veteran's Administration and was diagnosed with TBI. Based on this information, the court sent the matter back for further consideration of Minamyler's conditions. The court accorded greater weight to Minamyler's mitigating mental-health issues and suspended him from the practice of law for one year but stayed the entire suspension on conditions.

While concurring in the sanction, Stratton wrote a separate concurrence to highlight the failure on remand of the examining psychiatrist to adequately address the effects of Minamyler's TBI and PTSD on his fitness to practice law. The examining psychiatrist issued a four-and-a-half-page report based on his one-hour-and-forty-five-minute interview with Minamyler. He acknowledged Minamyler's TBI in only 3 sentences and performed no meaningful analysis of the effects of TBI on his practice. Stratton believed that this scant treatment was not helpful to the court's decision-making, but was illustrative of what is often the medical community's inadequate treatment of these issues.

Noting that the case is symbolic of the problem many veterans face as they return from war with TBI/PTSD, Stratton wrote that too often, the medical community fails to recognize how TBI differs from PTSD, to distinguish between the physical and psychological symptoms of TBI, and to appreciate that although TBI has psychological symptoms, it is a medical condition with real consequences. Noting that this was Minamyler's first disciplinary action in an otherwise unblemished 30-year legal career, Stratton wrote that she hoped that the monitoring of his compliance would be done with a full appreciation and understanding of his wounds of war.

Stratton's concurring opinion contains an analysis of PTSD and TBI and their interplay and effect on the behaviors of wounded war veterans. The opinion also discusses the need for better recognition, diagnosis and treatment of these conditions when wounded veterans enter our justice system. The full opinion can be found at <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/rod/docs/pdf/0/2011/2011-ohio-3642.pdf>.

Summaries of Articles Regarding Veterans and the Criminal Justice System

Shein, *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Criminal Justice System: From Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan*, The Federal Lawyer (Sept. 2010) 24.

This article focuses on the evolution of federal law where PTSD is or should be a mitigating factor in sentencing.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has once again raised its ugly head as a result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This condition has had a deep impact on our criminal justice system following the Vietnam War and will continue to do so long after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended. While PTSD clearly existed prior to the Vietnam War, it increased during and after Vietnam, with many Vietnam veterans also struggling with suicide and drug use, perhaps caused, at least in part, by PTSD. Some estimate that as many as 100,000 Vietnam veterans have ended their lives by suicide. The rise in veterans suffering from PTSD after the Vietnam War has had an effect on the criminal justice system as well.

With veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. is seeing another surge in individuals suffering from PTSD, with an estimated 30% of returning veterans affected. A legal practitioner who has a client suffering from PTSD as a result of military service should raise the issue with the court. This article highlights various departures under the U.S. sentencing guidelines § 5K2.13 and variances under 18 U.S.C. § 3553 related to mitigation in sentencing. Veterans' treatment courts are a promising sign that the country is beginning to understand the severity of the problems facing many of the veterans returning from war zones, including the problems associated with PTSD. To read the full article, see <http://www.federalcriminallawcenter.com/CM/Articles/PTSD-in-our-Criminal-Justice-System-final.pdf>.

McMichael, *The Battle on the Home Front*, ABA Journal (Nov. 2011) 17.

This article highlights the first and longest operating Veterans Treatment Court, how it works, and its successes.

Veterans Treatment Courts like the one in Buffalo, NY, work with troubled veterans to get them counseling, and link them to treatment and other benefits they may not have known about or skipped over upon their return home. The program is aimed at helping them regain the sense of discipline and camaraderie they had in uniform, and steering them onto a more positive path in life. Studies during the past 15 years show that these "problem-solving" or "collaborative" courts enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and are more cost-effective than the typical manner of processing offenders. To read the full article, see http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/the_battle_on_the_home_front_special_courts_turn_to_vets_to_help_other_vets/.



Evelyn Lundberg Stratton

Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, retired from the Supreme Court of Ohio after 23 years in the judiciary to pursue criminal justice reforms, particularly as they relate to mental health, juveniles, and veterans.

She came to the bench by a very different route. Born to missionary parents in Bangkok, Thailand, Stratton spent her childhood in Southeast Asia. She attended boarding school in South Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War and later in Malaysia, visiting America on occasion with her parents. At age 18, she returned to America alone with only a few hundred dollars in her pocket. Working her way through school, she earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Ohio State University College of Law.

She began her legal career as a trial lawyer in the courtrooms of Central Ohio. In 1989, she was the first woman to be elected Judge of the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, where she became known as “The Velvet Hammer” for her approach to sentencing in serious felony cases. Her success on the trial bench led to an appointment in 1996 to the Supreme Court of Ohio, where she was elected to a third term in 2008.

Stratton believes that the courts, in partnership with the mental health system, can affect positive change in the lives of many defendants whose mental illness has led to criminal activity. To that end, she formed the Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on Mental Illness & the Courts, which was composed of mental health, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals who were dedicated to mental health initiatives in the court system. That committee has now merged into the Attorney General Task Force on Mental Illness and Criminal Justice, and she still serves as co-chair along with Attorney General Mike DeWine.

Nationally, Stratton is a co-founder and former co-chair of the Judges’ Leadership Initiative, a professional association that supports cooperative mental health programs in the criminal justice system. Her latest focus in Ohio and nationally is on establishing veterans courts to help those returning veterans with Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and other issues, whose problems may lead to involvement in the criminal justice system.

Since retiring from the bench, she works through EStratton Consulting, LLC on criminal justice reforms, particularly focusing on engaging the judges in different states in these

reform efforts. She is also Of Counsel to a major Ohio law firm, Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP.

Among her many honors are the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Angels Award, as well as the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Adoption Excellence Award.

Additionally, in May 2008, Stratton received an Ellis Island Medal of Honor at a ceremony in New York City. Established in 1986 by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations, the Ellis Island Medals of Honor pay tribute to American citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their communities, their nation and the world. Ranking among the nation's most prestigious awards, recipients are listed in the Congressional Record.

Stratton is the wife of John A. Lundberg III, and the mother of two adult sons. She enjoys painting, Thai cooking, and fly fishing with her husband. But surely her most interesting accomplishment was her first-place finish in a college Stampede Girls Goat Tying Competition — a talent she later put to good use as a trial lawyer.

APPENDIX 1

State of Ohio Resources for Veterans

(NOTE: This is only a partial list of key resources)

(1) SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

Specialized Dockets Section — offers free technical assistance to help Ohio courts implement a veteran's treatment court or add a veterans track to an already existing specialized docket program. Also offers certification to become an approved specialized docket court so that it can be recognized by the Ohio Supreme Court.

www.sconet.state.oh.us/JCS/specDockets/default.asp

(2) OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Services for Military and Veterans — provides information on services for active-duty military and veterans provided through the Ohio Attorney General's offices.

www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/ServicesforVeterans.aspx/?from=nav

Patriot Program — volunteers through the Ohio Attorney General's Office offer free legal help to active duty military members and their families. The services offered are: preparing a living will, powers of attorney for health-care decisions or other purposes, and preparing wills or codicils. They also help with legal protections for active military such as halting administrative or civil court proceedings, limiting interest rates to six percent, and terminating leases. Some help with employment problems, compensations, evolution, and assistance with reinstatement. Others help with Ohio laws such as enrollment or school transfers, secure leaves of absence, and prevention of gas or electricity disconnection.

www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Services/Military

Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) — offers a course, using crisis intervention principles, that provides awareness of issues confronting distressed combat veterans, including post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), and de-escalation practices when encountering these veterans.

www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/opota

(3) DEPARTMENTS

(NOTE: Many state departments and agencies offer programs for veterans. Check with each department or agency for that resource.)

KEY RESOURCE — ***Ohio Department of Veterans Services*** — dedicated to ensuring that the rights and entitlements of personnel, earned by nature of their service to this country, are pursued and protected. Provides a detailed list of different resources and website links. Can also order the “Benefits Resource Guide” (is also online), a small flip book with invaluable resource information.

www.dvs.ohio.gov

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) — focus is on finding veterans jobs and job training. The Department provides links and resources to find education and benefits that are offered to veterans. Through the program, veterans can find a representative who will guide them through whatever help they need. If they have a more challenging need, ODJFS refers them to AMVETS, an agency that works with ODJFS on employment.

www.ifs.ohio.gov

Phone: 614-466-6282

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction: Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) — a statewide system developed by the University of Cincinnati to aid judges in sentencing so that they can then follow the defendant through the criminal justice system from pre-trial to reentry. ORAS now has a veteran's screen with questions about a veteran's background to assist in appropriate sentencing.

www.drc.ohio.gov/web/oras.htm

(4) OTHER STATE RESOURCES

Veterans Service Commission (VSC) — offers emergency help such as subsidies for food, rent and medical bills to military members, veterans, and their families. Veterans Service Commission's officers help veterans apply for federal, state and local benefits. Veterans can go to their county Veteran Services Commission for assistance, although the veterans must meet the same eligibility requirements that the VA requires.

Visit this website for a complete list of all Ohio VSC offices by county:

www.vab.ms.gov/files/csolist.pdf

Ohio Cares — program operated by the Ohio National Guard with other state and local agencies supporting the behavioral health needs of returning OIF/OEF veterans and their families. The purpose of this program is to enhance the services available for military personnel and their families and to complement the services available through the VA.

www.ohiocares.ohio.gov/

Phone: 800-761-0868

Rehabilitation Service Commission (RSC) — program for disabled veterans who need help finding a job. The RSC provides vocational rehabilitation to help them obtain and retain employment. The RSC also helps veterans obtain rehabilitation services such as hospitalization, surgery, treatment or help with artificial limbs or braces, eyeglasses or hearing aids, or other services such as occupational and physical therapy.

www.rsc.ohio.gov

Phone: 614-438-1200

APPENDIX 2 Federal Resources for Veterans

(NOTE: This is only a partial list of key resources)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Veterans Health Administration — offers health care to veterans and their families. There are five medical centers, thirty clinics, and eight veteran centers in Ohio to meet the health needs of veterans. The facilities offer traditional hospital services, in addition to, services for audiology and speech pathology, dermatology, dental, geriatrics, neurology, oncology, podiatry, prosthetics, urology, and vision care. The medical centers also offer mental health inpatient and outpatient services. The VHA also offers information for veterans to reach optimal health. Information is available for different illness that veterans may face. Clinical programs are offered to treat the illnesses.

www.va.gov/landing2_vetsrv.htm

Phone: 877-222-8387

Visit this website to access the complete list of locations and contact information for each medical center, clinic, and veteran center in Ohio.

www2.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?STATE=OH

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Veterans Benefits Administration — offers a wide variety of federal benefits to veterans and their families, such as vocational training, pensions, loans, life insurance and many more. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides a fact sheet, with contact information, listing all the benefits, and the length of time a veteran may be eligible from the time they are released.

www.vba.va.gov/VBA

Phone: 800-827-1000

Veterans Job Assistance Websites — the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment Training Service (VETS) offers training and employment services to veterans through a "Jobs for Veterans State Grants" Program, in which funds are distributed to state workforce agencies in proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within the state. Through this grant, there are two staff positions: Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER). The DVOP specialists specialize in employment needs of veterans with an emphasis on the homeless and those with an educational disadvantage. The LVERs work with the employers and actively participate in outreach and advocacy efforts to increase the hiring of veterans. They conduct seminars for the employers and job search workshops for the veterans.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services currently have 72 LVERs in Ohio who work directly with veterans on employment and training issues (disabled veterans are their highest priority). To locate a LVER in your county, visit the following website:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/veterans/locate/index.stm>

The following website, offered through the Department of Labor, provides a shortcut to information and services for job seekers:

www.dol.gov/dol/audience/aud-unemployed.htm Phone: 614-466-2768

The following website, offered through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, provides a list of websites for veterans seeking employment:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/veterans/employment/index.stm>

Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative — purpose is to link veterans with substance abuse or mental health issues in the criminal justice system with treatment and benefits offered by the VA. VJO is working to develop a relationship between the court systems and the VA medical centers. Each VA medical center is assigned a Veterans' Justice Outreach Specialist who is responsible for direct outreach, assessment, and case management of the local veterans who are involved in courts and jails.

www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/VJO.asp

APPENDIX 3
Volunteers/Pro Bono/Peer Mentors for Veterans

(NOTE: This is only a partial list of key resources)

(1) VOLUNTEERS — PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF) — promotes the importance and value of legal aid staff and volunteer attorneys to represent veterans. OLAF is committed to make sure that low-income veterans have access to legal information, advice, and representation. OLAF works with legal aid clinics to ensure that attorneys ask clients about past military status.

www.olaf.org

Ohio Military/Veterans Legal Assistance Project (OMVLAP) — a new non-profit created to provide statewide pro bono legal services to low income veterans, with the call center operated by Capital Law School.

www.mvlap.org

Phone: 877-759-6182

Ohio Legal Services — online database in which eligible veterans can find free or low-cost legal assistance by county or zip code. (NOTE: This website is for civil matters only).

www.ohiolegalservices.org/public/legal_problem/veterans

ABA Military Pro Bono Project — improves access to pro bono civil legal assistance for active-duty military and expands opportunities for attorneys to provide pro bono services.

www.militaryprobono.org/

Legal Aid Agencies — there are a number of legal aid organizations and agencies throughout Ohio that provide free or low-cost help to veterans, including city and county bar associations, law school clinics, and the Ohio State Bar Association. For a complete list, visit this website:

www.olrs.ohio.gov/legal-aid-agencies

Bar Associations, Legal Aid Societies — for a list of Ohio bar associations and legal aid agencies that provide free or low-cost legal assistance, visit:

<http://lawyersforwarriors.blogspot.com/>

(2) VOLUNTEERS — PEER MENTORS

Volunteer Veterans — anyone may sign up who wishes to provide volunteer services to veterans. There is a short form to fill out in which you choose where you would like to volunteer and at which location—whether a VA medical center, outpatient clinic, community-based outpatient center, vet center, or national cemetery. Each Veterans Court is encouraged to have a peer mentor program for the veteran defendant in their system.

www.volunteer.va.gov/apps/VolunteerNow/

American Corporate Partners (ACP) — Long-Term Career Development Through Mentoring — a nationwide program dedicated to helping veterans transition from the armed services to the civilian workforce through mentoring, career counseling, and networking with professionals from some of America's finest corporations and select universities. ACP's recruitment of new mentors and the demonstration of their success not only encourage additional involvement but also significantly increase public awareness. ACP is a tool for networking and long-term career development.

www.acp-usa.org

(3) OTHER RESOURCES

Attorney General Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Illness

(Co-chairs: Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Evelyn Lundberg Stratton)

Subcommittee on Veterans Courts and Military Affairs

(Co-Chairs – Tammy Puff, North Central Ohio Regional Director and Director of Veterans Outreach, Representing Ohio Attorney General's Office and Judge Robert P. Milich, Youngstown Municipal Veterans Treatment Court, Representing Youngstown Municipal Veterans Treatment Court)

Subcommittee deals with issues of Veterans who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system. These Specialized Docket Courts try to deal with the reason why the Veteran has entered the criminal justice system and connects the veteran with resources for treatment, both federal and state. Contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office to get involved.

Email: tammy.puff@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Phone: 567-231-6719

Ohio State Bar Association Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee — assists active, reserve, and National Guard military members, retired military members, veterans, and their families with many issues involving the legal system, such as training attorneys and judges on military issues.

Email: jemch@ohiobar.org

Phone: 614-487-4401

Veterans Treatment Courts — a hybrid between a drug and mental health court that operates with the drug/mental health court model. These courts promote sobriety, recovery and stability through different programs that involve cooperation and collaboration between the courts, the VA, VA benefits, volunteers, and the veteran's family support. This is a resource/information site run by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

www.nadcp.org/vets

Resurrecting Lives — works to develop protocols for diagnosis and recovery for veterans who are returning from war, primarily in Iraq and Afghanistan, for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Engages in advocacy and education about war-related TBI.

www.resurrectinglives.org

Veterans Association of America — non-profit organization that provides services to veterans including legal assistance, housing, employment opportunities, business ownership, discharge upgrades, medical assistance, family outreach, and other issues

www.vetsaa.org/templates/System/default.asp?id=39867

Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio – provides housing and treatment for veterans in cooperation with the Veterans Administration.

www.voago.org

(NOTE: There are many other veterans' organizations focusing on a particular war or group that also provide services. Most have websites with helpful information.)

Ohio Benefit Bank — web-based computer program that connects low and moderate-income Ohioans with access to resources such as tax credits and public benefits. It helps Ohioans access a multitude of applications that are administered by other agencies and organizations. It is a way to help ease the application for assistance process. Each particular agency or organization provides eligibility standards.

www.ohiobenefits.org/

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training — is a program sponsored by the Department of Mental Health and managed by the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) partners with the Center in the training sessions and works with Ohio communities to implement CIT programs. CIT trains officers and others on handling incidents or crises involving persons with a mental illness for the safety of everyone involved, using de-escalation and other techniques. CIT educates law enforcement about alternatives to jail.

International Website: www.citinternational.org/

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Ohio – Ohio CIT

www.namiohio.org/mental_health_programs/CIT

Betsy Johnson

Phone: 614-224-2700

Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence –Ohio CIT

www.neomed.edu/cjccoe/

Lt. Michael S. Woody

Phone: 330-896-4001

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation — provides suicide prevention information and resources, raises awareness, eliminates stigma, and increases help-seeking behavior for all Ohioans.

www.ohiospf.org

Stateside Legal — website for military members, veterans, their families, and advocates to help access benefits, find free legal help, and better understand their legal issues. Many websites provide information for military households or veterans. Stateside Legal's goal is to index the best legal information available in one easy-to-use site. It has also added interactive forms, videos, and legal analysis, and answers questions using plain English. The website has received help from many volunteers, including private attorneys, members of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps, civilian legal assistance attorneys, and veteran service officers.

www.statesidelegal.org