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James M. Biernat Jr., Chief Judge
16th Judicial Circuit Court,
Macomb County Probate Court,
42nd District Courts

News



For Immediate Release

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Judge Mark Switalski passes the Veterans' Treatment Court Docket to Judge Michael Servitto

Effective October 1, 2018, the Macomb County Veterans' Treatment Court Docket at the 16th Judicial Circuit Court made a change from Judge Mark Switalski to Judge Michael Servitto.

Judge Mark Switalski began the Macomb County Veterans' Treatment Court, along with 41B District Court Judge Carrie Fuca, in April 2012. Since that time, he has diligently presided over the docket on Thursdays and given countless hours to the program and supported and guided the veteran participants through difficult changes to better their situations. He also has spoken at many veteran events and was honored by Wayne State University in 2016 for his work with veterans.

"Judge Switalski could've sent me to prison. Instead, he gave me the chance to realize how valuable my life is. He gave us a good outlook on what life COULD really be like for us. He is going to be missed in the program," said Cortez Gilcrease, who successfully graduated from the program in November 2017.

The Veterans' Treatment Court Program is for veterans of the United States Armed Forces who have a military discharge other than dishonorable, are currently involved in the criminal justice system and have a substance abuse or mental health issue that is related to their service to our country. The program is designed to be 18 to 24 months long. It is divided into phases, each marking new progress in the program. All participants are assessed and treatment plans and/or goals are established. Resources are fully utilized, both through the Veterans Administration and the community, to insure treatment, medical needs, housing needs, etc. are met for every veteran.

The program also has a unique feature different from the other treatment court dockets; the mentor program. Veteran mentors are an integral part of the MCVTC. A mentor supports the veteran through his or her court and treatment process, provides navigation and support, and is an advocate for them. All mentors are veterans themselves. Every attempt is made to pair the veteran with a mentor of similar background, concerning military branch, conflict served, gender, etc. This promotes a higher comfort level for the veteran and a trust can sometimes more easily be formed.

The Macomb County Veterans' Treatment Court gives those who have served our country an opportunity to address and treat the issue(s) that brought them to the criminal justice system, and help them to get back to the productive life they had before and during their time in the service.

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As of October 1, 2018, Judge Michael Servitto has begun presiding over this treatment court docket. Judge Servitto graduated from Warren De La Salle Collegiate High School. He received a BA in Political Science from Michigan State University, and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Michigan State University-Detroit College of Law. During law school, he was a member of King Scholars Program, and was elected Note and Comment Editor of the Law Review. Judge Servitto began his legal career as Clerk in the Tort Defense Division of the Michigan Attorney General's Office and also worked as a Law Clerk for Judge Mark Switalski and for the Warren City Attorney. He worked for the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office from 2003 to 2016 as principal trial attorney and also served as Chief of the Cold Case Unit and Chief of the District Court. He received the Most Outstanding Young Lawyer Award from the Macomb Bar Association, and was a Mount Clemens Planning Board Commissioner.

"I am honored to preside over a program that employs an evidence-based approach to addressing the particularized needs of the men and women who have bravely served this country," said Judge Michael Servitto. "In creating Veterans' Treatment Court, Judge Mark Switalski recognized that the mental and physical trauma of combat and the difficulty of transitioning into civilian life has led some of our veterans into the criminal justice system. I look forward to giving the individuals who sacrificed for our freedoms a meaningful opportunity to surmount their impediments and become productive members of our community."

Chief Judge James Biernat Jr. added "As a former Drug Court Judge, I am very aware of the time commitment and dedication of our treatment court judges. I commend Judge Mark Switalski on his six years of service and truly appreciate Judge Michael Servitto taking on this new task."

The 16th Judicial Circuit Court has three operational problem-solving courts: Adult Drug Court (Hon. Jennifer Faunce and Hon. Joseph Toia), Veterans Treatment Court (Hon. Michael Servitto) and Mental Health Court (Hon. Carl Marlinga). There is also a new pilot docket, Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program (Hon. James Maceroni) that began in 2017. All of these programs receive grant funding from the State Court Administrative Office to assist with program costs. For Fiscal Year 2019, these programs will receive a combined total of \$252,569.50.

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