VETERANS INTERVENTION PROJECT WINS TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES’ ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Tuesday night, August 23, 2011, the Texas Association of Counties honored the Travis County Veterans Intervention Project (VIP) for their ground-breaking work. The VIP received the 2011 Best Practices Achievement Award. A collaboration of more than 35 federal, state, and local agencies, the goal of VIP is to identify incarcerated combat veterans who may be suffering from the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

The VIP was formed and is co-chaired by Travis County Constables Maria Canchola (Precinct Four) and Bruce Elfant (Precinct Five). Through her personal experience as a spouse of a Vietnam veteran, Constable Canchola understands the physical and mental challenges that returning soldiers face. Together the two Constables set out to establish a linkage between the Travis County criminal justice system and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. As a result of the VIP’s work, the average 153 veterans who are arrested in Travis County each month are now identified, evaluated, and referred for appropriate services the first time they are arrested. The VIP also initiated and helped implement a specialized Travis County Veteran’s Court that offers deferred adjudication for veterans who complete court ordered counseling and treatment programs.

Describing the project and her collaboration, Constable Canchola said, “We have a responsibility to help these returning soldiers when they have spent several tours of duty in a war zone. The issues they bring home with them can be daunting and difficult to diagnose, but the aim of this program & agency collaboration is to help them reintegrate into their community.”

For more than 10 years the Texas Association of Counties Best Practices Program has searched for county leaders who have created new, effective, and efficient solutions to common problems facing local governments. Programs are judged by a committee of experienced elected officials from across the state. Winning programs are those that push beyond the status quo and do more with less. They must be programs that save the taxpayers money while increasing or improving county services.

For more information about the VIP program contact:
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