



## Veterans' Court in Buffalo, New York is Only One in US

[Printer Friendly](#) [Email Article](#) [Discuss Article \(2\)](#)  
[delicious](#) | [digg](#) | [reddit](#)

Josh Boose

[NBC - WGRZ 2 on your side TV](#)

May 27, 2008

May 22, 2008, Buffalo, NY - There's a new program in Buffalo aimed at helping local veterans. It's called Veteran's Court. It's a program designed by the Buffalo City Court to keep non-violent offenders, who are veterans, out of jail.

2 On Your Side's Josh Boose asked Judge Robert Russell, "Did you see veterans locally here, falling through the cracks in a sense?"

"We seemed to notice, here locally, we may have been working with veterans in a drug treatment court, we worked with a number of veterans in a mental health treatment track; however, when one veteran was working with one veteran, peer to peer, it appeared to increase our probability of success with that population," said Russell.

After a year of planning, Veteran's Court kicked-off in January.

Here's what happens: If a veteran is arrested for a non-violent offense, they can ask to enter Veteran's Court where they can get proper treatment, mentors who can help them and assistance with any military benefits from the Veteran's Hospital.

"It's a group that many may not have the same degree or understanding or appreciation for," said Russell.

There are some strict rules, if you're in the program you must remain sober, lead a law abiding life and find a stable job or schooling.

Judge Russell says there are no additional costs. The court expenses already exist and there are some volunteers.

"So there's no out of pocket expenses for the city or something like that," Boose asked Russell.

"No," the judge replied.

So far, Buffalo is the only city in the country to focus in on the needs of veterans like this.

Russell and Buffalo City Court Projects Director Hank Pirowski say it's something other cities are taking note of.

"Where do you see this a year from now," Boose asked Pirowski.

"One hundred vets without a problem in the next twelve to eighteen months and I hope to see 15, 20, 25 other veteran's courts open across the country," he replied.

Right now about 35 veterans are in the program. They are right in the middle of it now. Those who complete the program will graduate at the beginning of next year.

Veterans who need some help but are not violating the law in anyway can go through the program too. For more information about Veteran's Court, call 716-845-2697.

Copyright © 2008 Multimedia Entertainment Inc.

Veterans for Common Sense

Post Office Box 15514

Washington, DC 20003