

## **Veterans Court Begins in Broward County**

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Broward County celebrated its new Veterans Court on Monday, April 30, 2012, with a distinctive opening ceremony, featuring guest speaker Will Gunn, Esq., U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel. County Judge Edward H. Merrigan, an 18-year veteran and Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, was officially honored as the presiding judge for Broward's Veterans Court by Chief Judge Peter M. Weinstein. Kicking off the event was the Color Guard representing the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

The first docket for the county's Veterans Treatment Court will be held on Monday, May 7, 2012, in courtroom 344.

Broward County Veterans Court is a voluntary 12-18 month program designed for veterans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and are currently experiencing legal problems due to suffering from behavioral, mental health, or substance abuse disorders. An alternative to the traditional court setting, Veterans Court will provide services such as intensive probation supervision, counseling and peer mentoring, random drug and alcohol testing, medication monitoring and social services. The Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability by providing veterans with the tools to move forward with their lives while satisfying the legal requirements of the court process.