

Minnesota Post Donates to Substance Abuse Court

VFW-supported court program gives non-violent offenders a second chance

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Harley Droba, commander of Post 2948 in International Falls, Minn., made a \$1,000 donation in September on behalf of his Post to the Borderland Substance Abuse Court.

Koochiching County District Court Judge Charles LeDuc, who presides over the specialized



court, accepted the donation.

Droba, who also serves on the International Falls City Council, said two Koochiching County veterans are currently enrolled in the program and a total of 18 from Koochiching and neighboring Lake of the Woods County have participated.

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“This program is specifically for people who are trying to change their lives,” said Droba, who served in Korea from 1996-97. “It’s about holding people accountable.”

For more than 11 years, the Borderland Substance Abuse Court has worked with non-violent drug-related offenders who suffer from addiction to alcohol or other drugs.

Derek Briggs, a Navy Persian Gulf War veteran who has served numerous times as Post 2948 commander, is a graduate of this program. He is four years sober.

Briggs said he suffered from PTSD and the only relief he found was to drink himself to sleep each night. Once he hit his 30s, however, his body couldn’t handle it. He says he would go four days straight without sleep because he was trying not to drink.

“It is an awesome program,” said Briggs, who decided to try and get accepted into the substance abuse court after his fourth DUI offense. “It saved my life. I’m a totally different person now.”

Drug courts are found nationwide and have proven to be an effective tool for improving outcomes for the thousands of non-violent offenders struggling with addiction who enter the court system every year.

Photo caption: Left photo: VFW Post 2948 Commander Harley Droba meets with Koochiching County District Court Judge Charles LeDuc following Droba’s presentation of a \$1,000 donation from his Post in early September to the Borderland Substance Abuse Court. The International Falls, Minn., Post agreed to donate to the court because veterans are enrolled in the program. Right photo: VFW Post 2948 member Derek Briggs, who has served numerous times as Post commander, with his service dog Kelsey. Briggs is a graduate of the Borderland Substance Abuse Court and also is four years sober. He credits the court with saving his life.

By [Janie Dyhouse](#), Associate Editor, VFW magazine