

Mark C. Curran Jr., Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sheriff Curran Expands Veteran's Ambassador Program

Sheriff Mark Curran is proud to announce the expansion of the Veteran's Ambassador Program. The Veteran's Ambassador Program became fully operational on Veterans Day last year to better address first-response to veteran homelessness and veterans in-need and in-crisis. Initially, the Lake County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Veteran's Assistance Commission, Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, PADS Lake County, Midwest Veteran's Closet, and Medal of Honor Recipient Allen J. Lynch collaborated to ensure no veterans are left behind.

To ensure crisis services are available to those in need, a plan was created for Lake County Sheriff's Office employees. Select employees received awareness training on the issues of veteran homelessness and veterans "in crisis;" as well as transport, shelter, and referral options for immediate assistance. Training was provided by VA staff, VAC Director Andrew Tangen, and Mr. Joel Williams from PADS Lake County.

A majority of those who received the initial training served in the military. They returned to their respective Sheriff's Office Divisions to train other Sheriff's Office personnel. Thus, Sheriff Curran's Deputies and other employees became Veteran Ambassadors for the VAC and VA.

Included in the plan is a 'Police Referral Card' which includes emergency contact numbers for the VA along with other resources. A shelter plan was also implemented.

With the expansion of the program, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office offered their commitment to the program. State's Attorney Mike Nerheim and his team will be accessible in the courts to ensure collaboration and services to veterans in need. The Lake County Veteran's and Family Services Foundation is joining to create additional awareness and share information on the access to social-services available.

Lake County Veterans and Family Services Foundation President and Founder Paul Baffico said, "It is truly an honor for the Lake County Veterans and Family Services Foundation to participate with Lake

County Sheriff Mark Curran and Veteran Service Officer Andrew Tangen in the Veterans Ambassador Program for Lake County. We are very excited to be a part of this important program for our Veterans.”

Lake County State’s Attorney Mike Nerheim said, “I am proud to partner with the Sheriff’s Office on this great program. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for all of us. It is incumbent upon us to ensure we are doing everything we possibly can to help those veterans that need help, and those that have come into contact with the criminal justice system.”

Sheriff Mark Curran added, “On this Armed Forces Day, I am proud to say nearly all Lake County Sheriff’s staff are trained in this important initiative. Our team has recommitted, ensuring services are accessible by transport to the VA in North Chicago and the VAC in Waukegan. From crisis to the courts, those serving, prior military, and their families will always have a partner in Lake County.”

End of Release