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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

THE 19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HOSTS ITS 11TH ANNUAL VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

On Friday, November 11, 2022, 10 Veterans participated in the [Veterans History Project](#) at the Lake County Courthouse. The Veterans History Project gathers the oral histories of veterans, which are given in response to questions asked by volunteer judges and attorneys and recorded by volunteer court reporters. The transcripts are archived at the [Library of Congress](#), making accessible the personal accounts of American veterans for future generations to hear the stories directly from the members of the military. This year's group included veterans of the United States Army, the United States Air Force, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy who were involved in the military during both conflicts and times of peace dating back to the Korean War.

Addressing the Veterans, Chief Judge Mark L. Levitt said, "It is my honor to be here today to welcome you, honor you, and thank you for your service and commitment to our Country. Today, while we are looking back at your service, we are also looking forward because what we do here today memorializes your past, providing a guidepost for future generations to be able to review your transcripts, listen to your voices, and understand what you went through."

The Lake County Veteran's History Project is supported by resources from many community organizations including Beach Park School District #3, Freedom Farm for Vets, Freemont Elementary School, Gold Star Families, HealTeam6, John S. Clark Elementary School, Kildeer Countryside Community Consolidated School District #96, Lake County Bar Association, Lake County Bar Foundation, Lake County Honor Flight, Lake County Public Defender's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Office, Lake County State's Attorney's Office, Lake County TV, Lake County Veterans and Family Services Foundation, Lake County Young Marines, Quilts of Valor, Stanton Middle School, St. Gilbert Catholic School, United States Marine Corps League Tri-County Leathernecks Detachment #1392, Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County, and Veteran's Treatment and Assistance Court.

Thursday's event began with a breakfast followed by North Chicago Police Officer James Perrin singing the *National Anthem*, the Lake County Young Marines leading the attendees in the *Pledge of Allegiance*, and Lake County State's Attorney's Office Investigator Daniel August singing *God Bless America*.

United States Army Reserve Ambassador for Illinois, Colonel Paul J. Hettich was Mandatory Retired as a Colonel with 30 years of service. His highest award is the Legion of Merit. He is a recipient of the Civil Affairs Regiment General Winfield Scott Bronze Medallion and the Transportation Regiment Honorable Order of Saint Christopher. He is branch qualified in Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, Signal, Transportation, and Medical Services. He has 19 Additional Skill Identifiers. He completed five combat deployments in Iraq (3), Bosnia/Kosovo (1), and the Horn of Africa (1). He commanded at all levels from Special Forces Detachment Commander to Army Component Commander and is a Joint Qualified Officer. He was awarded three U.S. State Department Meritorious Honor Medals, two Bronze Star Medals, and the NATO and United Nations Medals. He was recognized by Illinois Governor Bruce

Rauner as an Honor 200 Illinois Bicentennial Honoree (2018) and awarded the BSA NESA Outstanding Eagle Scout Award.

Colonel Hettich shared with the group "We come here today to recognize service members past and present. It is important to note that Veterans Day is for the living. From the Revolutionary War to today, Americans have volunteered to serve in the United States Armed Forces. For many Veterans who fought in these wars, our Nation was important enough to them to endure long separations from their families, freeze in subzero temperatures, sweat in the humidity of jungles, or bake in the heat of the desert. Our military is the most powerful in the world with sophisticated technological weapons systems, but what makes us different is that we consider our greatest asset to be our service men and women who have a common commitment to defense and love of Country. This is a mindset that binds Veterans together, unifies us, and goes to the heart of what it means to be an American. As a Nation, we must ensure that the service and sacrifice of our Veterans are never forgotten. The Military believes that every service member is a service member for life, as Americans we must be committed to the successes of those that have served; let today serve as a day we honor our Veterans and recognize their service to America."

The event was chaired by two of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Judges Michael G. Nerheim and Charles W. Smith, while emceed by Associate Judge Veronica M. O'Malley.

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