

First Edition
Volume 2

VTC Graduate Testimonials



Bexar County Veterans Treatment Court

"Leave No Veteran Behind"

Current VTC Team

Judge Wayne Christian, Colonel, US Army Retired
Joshua Childers, USAF Veteran, VTC Director
Ronald Mora, VTC Court Manager
Christopher Whittemore, USMC Veteran, VTC Case Manager
Valerie Serna, US Army Veteran, VTC Probation Officer
Archorah “Cho” Cameron, Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist
Ernestina “Tina” Valdez, Veteran Justice Outreach Specialist
Joe Bohnenblust, US Navy Veteran, VTC Probation Officer
Joanne DeHoyos, VTC Defense Counsel
Patricia Benavides, County Court Six Court Coordinator

We are thankful to the service, sacrifice, and selflessness of those who have and will always be a part of the VTC legacy.

Acknowledgements:

1. Bexar County VTC is supported by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans’ Assistance. The Fund for Veterans’ Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. For more information, visit www.TVC.Texas.gov.



Fund for Veterans’ Assistance

Helping Veterans Starts Here

2. This publication would not exist if not for Mike Stachowitz, who serves as the County Court 6 Court Reporter. Mr. Stachowitz has recorded and catalogued each testimonial over 750 graduates throughout the years. We thank him for capturing each impactful testimonial published in this volume. We wish you well in your well-deserved and earned Retirement!

Table of Contents

Overview 4

Testimonials 5-22



VTC Testimonials Overview

At the beginning of each Veterans Treatment Court Docket, Judge Christian invites graduating Veterans of the program to stand with him to receive a VTC Challenge coin as a symbol of their yearlong journey's end. Following a celebratory congratulations, Judge Christian turns the floor over to each Veteran to share with the Court and fellow VTC participants their thoughts on the program.

Within this booklet, is a small fraction of the over 750+ graduate speeches recorded in the past 11 years. Some speeches by the Veterans, whose names have been altered for privacy, have been condensed due to length, but the words of the Veterans have not been altered. It is our hope that the following testimonials show the efficiency and impact, that the VTC is having both in the individual lives of our Veteran participants, but also how it affects the greater Bexar County Community.



Specialist Ballard

January 13, 2020

We are all here for different reasons but were all here because we need this. I never took care of myself. I never thought I had any problems, but we all do. Although, this program is over for me, I still have my whole life in front of me just like the rest of us. Remember that. Use all the resources and remember what you learned and went thru during this program and stay on the right path.



TVC Chairwoman Koerner presents VTC with 2022-23 TVC FVA Grant

Specialist Merriman

January 13, 2020

It has been a long year. I can say that I was probably on the line of last chances. For the first few month's it is rough because you are learning how to balance your schedule with life and what the court is asking. The program saved my job as a vehicle technician since I had to drive customer's cars. With a DUI on my record, I would have lost my job and way of life.

In the end, it is all worth it. I would like to thank all the court staff. First phase is rough, second phase is a little bit less, and before you know it you are in phase four. It does get better so do not ever give up. Good luck to you will, all get here one day.

Sergeant Taylor

December 16, 2019

I wanted to thank Judge Christian, Mr. Childers, Mr. Mora and the rest of the VTC Court and everyone who came into my life during this program. I ended up getting a DWI, ended up in jail, and I thank god that a program like this exists to help us. I am thankful for my wife of 29 years, and my children.

Follow the rules, stay clean, show up when you are supposed to be, and you will make it. You have to be willing to do your part. It is not easy and it was very hard for me for the year. I just again wanted to thank my family, sponsor, and the court for all the help and support.

Captain Martinez

December 16, 2019

As long as you tell yourself that you are accountable for the action that you did, you will be able to get through this program. Another fact is you signed the contract and it tells you exactly what you need to do while in the program. The sooner you are able to accept the requirements of the program the easier it will be. Lastly, there will be many temptations at parties. Stay sober. You have all the temptations of the holidays, Super Bowl, Spurs games, and so on. Leave the temptations behind you and accept the responsibility of your actions and this program will be a breeze.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Ramirez

November 18, 2019

I am not sure what got you here, but I got in trouble a year and half ago. In a sense, I am glad that I got in trouble so I could see where all my faults were. Furthermore, what I needed to fix. I am glad that I was in this program as it not only helped me but it helped my family. Especially my daughters and my wife. I am very grateful for the second opportunity that I have received by coming into this program. This is a huge milestone for me receiving this coin from Judge. I know many people need help and you can get the help that you need through this program.



Judge Christian presenting a Graduation VTC Coin

Senior Airman Wernette

October 21, 2019

I want to thank Judge Christian because he treats everyone in the VTC like people and not prisoners. I really appreciate that. I am also very thankful for Officer Bohnenblust because he is very flexible and supportive of all the steps that we have to go through. I also want to say, this program goes quicker the more you work and stay busy. Good luck to all of you.

Lieutenant Colonel Alvarado

October 21, 2019

It was a very quick year. I would not have said that in the beginning, but it went by fast. It was not the easiest year I have had but it went by quick. There are a few bits of information, which I would like to leave you with before I go. First thing, I was not in a good place when I came into this program, and I thought my life was over. After spending a few hours talking to the staff, I was told, "This event doesn't define you". It does not define any of you either. In fact, for me, this program opened many doors that I did not know existed. I certainly took me out of that dark place. I want to thank the DA for supporting the VTC program and everybody that comes through the doors of the court, and for making me feel like a person again. Do not just check the boxes and use this program to better yourselves. It will get you to a better place.



VTC Community Supervision Officers Serna and Bohnenblust

Sergeant Thomas

August 19, 2019

First, I want to thank Judge Christian and the rest of the VTC staff. What I can tell you is, do not take this opportunity lightly. We are all receiving a second chance to right the wrong that we did, and should not be taken lightly. Just do not look down on yourself. Everyone makes mistakes. Just learn from your mistakes and help each other in the program. Be their battle buddy and help each other through the program. Thanks.

Master Sergeant Valdez

October 7, 2019

I thought a lot about what I would say when this day finally arrived. One year is a long time and filled with different emotions. I want to first thank Judge Christian and all the VTC staff for welcoming me warmly. At first, it was tough love but after that, it was all love. I got help the whole time I was in the program. During the program, I realized there was a lot wrong. You know mentally I was not there. I had problems with dependency, and I had been seeing counselors for my PTSD. I just buried everything and thought everything was going to be all right and eventually it was not. Everyone goes up and down but allow yourself time to heal. I got better physically and mentally, and this program was a big part of that. Listen to all the testimonials because they are true. Everybody benefits from the program that will actually take advantage of it.



VTC Holiday Safety Briefing to Navy Corpsman Medical Training School at JBSA-Ft Sam Houston

Major Orr

August 19, 2019

You always hear, do what you are told, and you will make it through the program. That is part of it but that is definitely not all of it. What brings you here is what is more important. A bad decision, bad attitude, usually goes along with it. It is kind of, what happened to me. I thought that I could do this on my own. An attitude thing. I also thought, I could get away with it. Well

let me assure you. It catches up with you. Take full advantage of this program and listen to the people who are in charge. Take it seriously and make the most out of it. The most important thing is what you will do when you day comes to graduate. Will you make the right decisions? The young folks that I see here, make the right choices, if you need to have an attitude change, do it. Get the help you need.



**VTC Court Reporter
Mike Stachowitz**

Specialist Jacqueline

August 19, 2019

This has been a long journey and I am not going to try to get emotional. It is very evident that all the staff that is here is for the Veteran. I started the year strong but at the six-month mark, I relapsed and ended up in Villa Serena. Two weeks before that I was on work release and had to report to jail every night for two weeks. After the work release and the stay at Villa Serena that really opened my eyes to my problem. I have been an alcoholic for 20 years and it was not until this happened that I was truly able to get the help that I needed to really get myself on the right path. For that, I am truly grateful to the VTC staff. To Judge Christian and the rest of the VTC staff, thank you for changing my life. At times I was like, "what are you guys doing here?" but I learned that it was for my own good.

Sergeant Ramirez

May 20, 2019

I first wanted to thank Judge Christian and the rest of the VTC staff. When I first started the program, I was in bad shape. I could not even right my own name. Thanks to my family, my girlfriend, and the VTC staff I was able to make it to this day. Even when you struggle, the staff is here to motivate you. They do not want anyone to fail and will work with you.

This program is like being in the military. You have to adjust and adapt. If you do this, you will make it. Looking back it does not seem like a year has passed. It went by quick. It really just becomes a routine. Follow what they say and do what you are supposed to do. You will make it and be up here giving your graduation speech.

Senior Airman Jones

May 20, 2019

I would like to first start off by saying how I got here was a little different. Initially I was not accepted into the program, my attorney went to Mr. Childers, and together they were able to approach the DA and get me into the program. When I first found I was not accepted, I was very depressed. Just like in life, there will be things that do not work out in your favor. It is how you deal with that issue that makes all the difference. The VTC has a way of forcing you to be accountable. That is really taking that look in the mirror and look at yourself and really come to the reality of what got you here in the first place. I will say the first few months were the hardest but the sooner you come to grips with the rules of the program the easier it will be.

So, embrace this process and accept that you have things you need to work on. The sooner you do this the sooner you will be successful in this program. I hope everyone takes this program to heart because there is many people who do not get a second or

third chance. Do not fight the program and do not think everyone is out to get you because they are not. If you do not think you can relate to Judge Christian or the rest of the staff, look to your left and right at your fellow VTC participants and lean on each other.



VTC Community Outreach with VJO Cho Cameron & VTC Court Manager Ron Mora

Staff Sergeant Moses

March 25, 2019

Right after my arrest, I was able to get a job in Austin, Texas. I was lucky enough for the court to allow the Austin VTC to supervise me, so I did not have to drive all the way back down here. No matter what you think of the court system, this program is here to help you. It will feel tough at times but keep pushing forward and do what you need to do, and you will be good. The bottom line is that we could have a conviction on our records for life if it was not for this program. I may have lost a job with the Austin Police Department right after my arrest but now that I have my life back on track, there are other departments that I can apply to. This is a huge opportunity. We can sit here and make excuses, trip ourselves up, and feel that we do not belong here. On the other hand, we can look at ourselves in the mirror and be grateful that we have this chance to work on ourselves and get a second chance.

Lieutenant Colonel Cassidy

February 25, 2019

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. It seems like a long year. You will get tired of blowing into the machine, calling the number for UA line, and things will become very monotonous. It may be long, but it is very worth it. The alternative is much worse. Thank you, Judge Christian. This is incredible.



VTC Briefing to Active Duty and Civilian Leaders at BAMC

Corporal Davis

November 18, 2019

I don't know what your journey is or what got you here, but I got in trouble a year and half ago, and in a sense I'm glad that it happened because I got to see where my faults were and what I needed to do to make it better. I'm glad I was in this program because it not only helped me, but it helped my family, especially my relationships with my daughters and my wife.

Staff Sergeant Medina

December 16, 2019

There are three things that I learned that helped me get through this program. The first was accountability. I held myself accountable for making a wrong choice. As long as you tell yourself you are accountable for that action you did, you will get through this program. Second, I signed a contract. It tells you exactly what this program requires. You will be in this program for 12 months and you will abide by that. The sooner that you can do the that, the easier the program is for you. And lastly, there is going to be a lot of temptation. Stay sober my friend. Accept that choice. Take accountability, take responsibility, and this program for you will be a breeze



Bexar County DA Joe Gonzales and former VTC Assigned ADA's

Staff Sergeant Shearer

January 13, 2020

I got back in 2004 from Iraq and like everybody else, I thought I was fine. It wasn't until 12 or 13 years later, looking back, that I saw how much my life had diverted. I was going completely in a different direction. I didn't even see it, didn't even know it. Alcohol became bigger and bigger. I couldn't put my finger on why. It jst was. I couldn't go into public without anxiety. I couldn't function like a normal person in a crowd. Because of this program I can say I am a nondrinker. I can go in public. Me and the wife can go dancing again. I got the medications I need deal with problems I have. I think most importantly I want to thank the VA, because the education they gave me, and sitting me down and really letting me see who I am, it really helped me. This program saved my life. It probably saved the life of my wife. She quit drinking to support me through this and now we're both done with alcohol.



Private First Class Simpson

June 7, 2021

I got a DWI. I think at the time when I was filling out the VTC paperwork to get in this program, I was still in denial about how alcohol was impacting my life and my decisions. It wasn't until I was forced into abstinence that I really see that it was a huge factor in my life. Without alcohol in this year, I think I've accomplished more in one year than I probably have in the last five to 10 years. I finished by bachelor's degree and got into St. Mary's Law School. I bought a house. So many things I've been able to accomplish by just being clear headed.

Airman Hill

June 7, 2021

The VTC saved my life. And more importantly, it probably saved somebody else's life. I was a cocky thinking I could drink and drive. I was just stupid. And I was drunk, a .12. I was running crazy, running amuck and then this program brought me down to earth. I got my coin! I am going to keep it in my pocket for the rest of my life. It means a lot to me because it's a damn hard program. You guys love the veterans. Judge Christian, you made a hard thing fun because of your attitude. You were tough, firm, but fair. So, for all the new veterans that got into this program, it's one-of-a-kind. It's a once-in-a-life-time deal, and I'm just so happy to be a part of it.



Judge Wayne A. Christian
VTC Presiding Judge: 2011-2022

**Overseeing almost 800 Active Duty and
Veterans successfully through the VTC.**

We wish you a healthy and happy retirement!

AIRBORNE!

