

> Lt. Col. Ray Mitchell, USA (Ret)

COMMUNITY IMPACT: Assisting local veterans in need

When Lt. Col. Ray Mitchell retired from the Army after 27 years, he said he didn't realize there was a huge veteran community that needed help. Then he was invited to a MOAA meeting and fell in love with the Chattanooga (Tenn.) Chapter.

"Now I have a mission and a purpose and reason," Mitchell said.

As president, he helps lead the chapter's efforts to assist local veterans and the military community.

In November 2024, the chapter helped stand up a veterans' court in the local court system, and it's one of the efforts of which Mitchell is most proud.

"Veterans that violate the law and get into the court system just get lost a lot of times," he said. "More often than not, these guys are struggling in life, and that's why they end up having a DUI or having drug possession."

When they get into the court system, it really drives them down and they can't get out of it, Mitchell added.

Part of having a veterans' court includes having mentors that get assigned to the veteran to be with them through the entire process.

When the veterans' court was getting ready to start, they were struggling with finding mentors. The MOAA chapter found seven people willing to volunteer, which is "pretty much what's driving and running the veterans' court for Hampton County," he said.

The chapter also received four Community Outreach Grants from The MOAA Foundation in 2025, with \$3,500 going toward supporting the veterans. The chapter can help if one of the veterans has transportation issues or needs help finding an apartment or buying furniture, Mitchell said.

Another went to the chapter's dental program to assist veterans in need of care.

"We were able to provide dental implants for about five veterans who were really in serious trouble," he said.

"We have a motto in our chapter: 'Continue to serve.' So that's what we're doing," Mitchell said. ■■■



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