

Press Release -

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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517-543-7500 ext 3740**

**CONTACT: Jonathan Greene
Eaton County Community Development Dept.**

Veteran Service Office Now Available at the County Courthouse

Charlotte, MI – The Eaton County Board of Commissioners recently voted to establish a veteran service office. The office will open on October 1, 2008 and will directly handle the needs of veterans in Eaton County. Previously, the services were provided via a contract with Ingham County which meant Eaton County veterans traveled to Lansing to access benefits. The newly established veteran service office will be housed in the Eaton County Community Development Department in the Eaton County Courthouse located at 1045 Independence Blvd, Charlotte, MI 48813.

Eaton County has over 9,200 veterans. That number is expected to increase with the de-escalation in Iraq and the need for troops there is decreased. An Eaton County veteran service office located in Eaton County is the only way to adequately and appropriately serve the current number of veterans and the expected increase in the coming years. Adequately and appropriately serving Eaton County veterans' assures each veteran will receive the highest and best treatment they deserve in the geographic area in which they live. The Eaton County Veteran Service Office will serve as an advocate for county veterans as they are tasked with being the communication medium between veterans and the benefits they may have a right to receive.

Veterans who meet certain eligibility requirements, which can include the period of service, area of service, discharge conditions, etc. could be entitled to a myriad of benefits offered by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). For the 2008 Fiscal

year, congress appropriated \$90 billion to the VA which is used to pay among other items, veteran pensions, service connected disability compensation claims, the VA home loan program, and education assistance like the GI Bill. To access those benefits, veterans are advised to contact the Eaton County Veteran Service Officer Jonathan Greene for details.

Furthermore, the local office creates a one stop shop where veterans and/or their families can be connected with the many other services provided by the county like housing rehabilitation assistance, house purchase assistance and local non county services like food pantry, clothing banks, volunteer services, employment services, elder care, etc.

According to Eaton County Board of Commissioner's Chairman Joe Brehler, "The establishment of a local office ensures each veteran and their claim is dealt with properly and professionally. Local veterans' service offices are an integral part of the community and its human services network. A localized presence means veterans who are not able to travel long distances or do not have the means to travel can be connected to the benefits for which they are eligible."

Eaton County will begin administering veterans' assistance on October 1, 2008. The office will be located within the County Courthouse at 1045 Independence Blvd. Charlotte, MI 48813. Office hours will be Monday through Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm. Information and inquiries can be directed to the Eaton County Veteran Service Officer, Jonathan Greene at 517-543-3740 or the Director of Community Development, Claudine Hannold at 517-543-3689.

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