

Special courts give veterans a second chance

By Foon Rhee, Sacramento Bee

Amos Lee Gregory Jr. didn't get help for post-traumatic stress from his time aboard Navy attack submarines. He got by – until the day he snapped.

He was headed to prison – until he found a court just for military veterans. There, he finally received treatment and counseling, and also awakened an interest in art that is now his career.

Wednesday marked a big milestone – after 18 months in Santa Clara County's veterans court, he "graduated."

He tried to act nonchalant about it, but when the judge declared that Gregory had completed all his requirements and wiped his record clean, his fist pump gave away how much it means.

"Everything," he told me. "The court saved my life."

Veterans courts have been steadily expanding across California. Now, they're coming to the Sacramento region; judges and advocates in El Dorado County plan to start one on Jan. 1. The state Department of Veterans Affairs hopes 20 are established by July – just as thousands of soldiers come home to California from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Read the whole story