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Veterans Get Free Legal Advice from "Project Salute"

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By Roger Weeder
First Coast News

JACKSONVILLE, FL -- Veterans from across the First Coast are turning to a volunteer legal team working for vets to get them answers about benefits.

"I bit the bullet, went ahead and served my time," says Vietnam veteran Donald Robbins. "Now I am paying for it...I did not follow up on it myself like I should have."

Robbins wants help getting disability benefits from the Veterans Administration that relate to a hit and run accident when he was a young man serving in the Navy.

Project Salute spent three days in Jacksonville meeting with veterans, hearing their problems and looking for solutions. The project is run by the University Of Detroit Mercy School Of Law.

Alex Mitrakus is a law student who made the trip from Detroit. He says the local response was unexpected.

"We had a huge turnout here," he said. "Some of us got called down at the last second."

Otis Boyd made the trip from Palatka to get assistance to file the necessary paperwork to get his disability benefit increased from 50% to 100%.

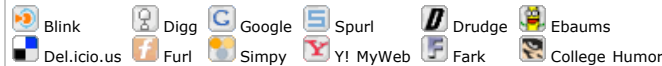
"My asbestosis is flaring up," he said holding a photocopy of a citation he received in World War II bearing President Truman's name.

Project Salute says in most cases veterans need help in filing an appeal and assistance in getting the right information in the right hands.

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Edited by Roger Weeder, Reporter

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