

HED: New VSO brings heart and passion  
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Erica Greene of Madisonville, Texas, is the county's new Veterans Service Officer and a Purple Heart recipient; she is still in training but is passionate about the job and helping the county's Veterans.

She was chosen for the position after a series of interviews by Madison County officials on Wednesday, December 14, during commissioners' court.

After her hire, Madison County Judge Clark Osborne would say he's proud of her hiring and knows she is the best person for the job.

Veterans Service Officers' responsibilities include many services for Veterans, including enrolling in Veterans Affairs to receive healthcare, filing disability compensation claims, and filing appeals.

According to Erica Greene, they also assist with finding Veterans rides to doctor's appointments and helping to maneuver the VA systems to receive medical care.

"A lot of our older veterans, our Vietnam era, the systems on the computer are difficult to maneuver, and that is where I come in, I come in and show them, essentially acting as them while they're here to fill out the forms that they need," said Erica Greene.

Greene also assists Veterans with an assist in upgrades to discharges, as well as appeals for ratings and helping to request raises in ratings, and they help with surviving family members' support, burials, and benefits for the spouse, according to Greene.

When it comes to being passionate about helping Veterans, Greene stated, "If a Veteran came to me and was looking for help, trying to find a job, housing, or if they needed to figure out how they're going to pay their rent for the next month, I would do anything in my power to help them."

She would state that the biggest hurdle in the office is finding volunteers to take Veterans to their doctor's appointments, "Typically, Madison County Veterans are enrolled in the Bryan-College Station VA, and that's central Texas, so that provides care in Temple, Texas."

Greene's primary focus is filing forms and helping the Veterans of Madison County. Still, according to her, she needs to be accredited, which means she has to undergo training, which can be completed in four months.

"I won't be able to file paperwork, but I can put them in touch with someone who does, and I can show them how to do it online through eBenefits, which is the system that the government

uses,” she would go on to say that she is the middle man when dealing with the VA systems, but that she is here to advocate, protect and serve our heroes.

Before being hired on to be the VSO of Madison County, Erica Greene worked at HEARTS Veterans Museum of Texas, where according to her, this is where she learned a lot about the systems of the VA.

“Not only are they a museum, but they do Veteran outreach just the same, so they’re a bigger entity of what I’m going to be doing here,” she stated while saying that Walker County has a VSO and the museum to help with Veterans.

Greene continued to tell her story about how she ended up in this position, saying, “In 2008, I was deployed to Afghanistan, and on that deployment, my truck was blown up by an IED, which is essentially a roadside bomb.”

In 2012, Erica Greene met her husband, James Greene (City Secretary of Madisonville), during her last deployment; it was in 2013 that they got married, and in 2014, she stated that she got out of the Army and moved back to Texas.

It was in 2016 when they moved their family to Madisonville, “I was a stay-at-home mom until roughly last year, and I think that the job was god sent for me to be here; it set me up for what I need to help the Veterans of Madison County,” she would add onto that one of her main motivations is her children.

According to Greene, she learned a lot by working at the HEARTS Veterans Museum, going as far as to say that she is passionate about the work and that she is proud of her country and its history and fellow Veterans.

“I have a like mind to these people; it’s a camaraderie that many people don’t understand, it’s a family, and it doesn’t matter if you know them or not; you’re still family,” she stated, while also saying that for years she struggled with her mental health, so she understands how veterans feel with dealing with the VA.

Greene has stated that she wants Veterans to feel that her office is a welcome spot for them to come in and chat while possibly having a cup of coffee, all for camaraderie.

One of the other things that Greene wants to do while in the office is gain more community support for veterans by volunteering; if you’re looking for more information on that, you can head to Greene’s office in the Madison County Courthouse or call her office at 936-348-2244

“When I was struggling with my mental health, I understood how draining it can be to wait on the phone, and if I can help any veteran to get the help that they need without making them more mad or upset than they are, I would do anything,” said Erica Greene, Madison County’s Veterans Service Officer.

CUT: Erica Greene, during one of her deployments in the Army, posing for a picture with a child from Paktika Province, Afghanistan, in 2012