

YOUR ACTIONS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Mickey Roberts, Esq.*

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If you are like me, most of the time we go about our day kind of on "automatic pilot." We are not, most of the time, mindful of how our actions, and especially our speech, can really make a difference in people's lives.

A few weeks ago I was reminded of how much influence a judge can have on someone's life. I



ran into a lawyer in Forsyth County, who reminded me of something I had done while Municipal Judge in Suwanee. In fact, I

had no memory of what I had done, but here is the story:

This lawyer represented a young man who had been arrested for DUI. He apparently was causing real trouble for himself and his family. His family thought that the military might be a way for him to change his life. So his lawyer came to me with a request that I dismiss or dead docket the DUI, which would allow the man to enter the military. I of course was skeptical, thinking that was a subterfuge for the man to get out of the DUI; in fact, I really thought that if I dismissed the DUI, the young man might go into the military for a short period of time, then get out of the military, and



hence avoiding the DUI prosecution. So apparently I first required the young man to perform community service, attend a couple of alcohol programs and

so forth, and at some point I did agree to dead docket the DUI, and he entered the military.

The rest of the story: Apparently this young man did turn his life around while in the military. He eventually went to Afghanistan where he earned several medals for his courage and valor under fire. He now is an officer in the military, and he is making a difference in other people's lives now, too.



I mention this story not to pat myself on the back, and I realize that I probably could not dead docket the case today, with all of the outside pressures associated with DUI cases. Also, I really did not remember the man or his story. But apparently by my actions, I made a difference in one person's life, which made a difference in many other people's lives. I think this is a lesson that especially judges should keep in mind when ruling on cases because their rulings, sentencing, words and actions can have a tremendous affect on not only the litigants but perhaps hundreds of other people as well.

*Mickey Roberts has been practicing law since 1980 and is a member of the State Bar of Georgia as well as the Gwinnett County Bar. A native of Gwinnett County, he graduated from Mercer University cum laude, attended Woodrow Wilson College of Law, and at the age of 23, established his law firm. He was the Judge for the City of Lilburn for 15 years before retiring in 1997. Mickey Roberts was also the Judge for the City of Suwanee for 14 years before retiring in December, 2000. You can visit Mickey at www.mrgadui.com.