

PRESS RELEASE

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Fred M. Mester Excellence in Paralegal Studies Award **Presented at Oakland Community College**

Oakland County, MI (June 20, 2007) – Irag war veteran Mandeline Dreasky has received Oakland Community College’s *Fred M. Mester Excellence in Paralegal Studies Award*. This award is presented annually to the top student at OCC.

“She is well respected,” said Douglas Kolly, program director of OCC’s paralegal program. “She is an example of what our graduates are capable of doing. Ms. Dreasky is dedicated and determined in all that she does. She is an all “A” student. As she excels in her own right, she works well with other students. She is a leader not only in academics, but also in her relations with others.

The award is named after the Honorable Fred M. Mester, Oakland Circuit Judge who teaches at Oakland Community College. “He has been with our program from the start and is held in the highest regard by students and faculty alike. Students stand in line to sign up for his class. He virtually sees every student go through the program. We wanted to honor him and the students at the same time,” Kolly said.

During the Irag war, Mandeline Dreasky served in Kuwait and Irag providing escorts for convoy. She was a member of the 1775th Military Police Company out of Pontiac. She took early retirement because of a back injury.

Upon her return to civilian life, Dreasky fell in love with the law while employed with court reporting agencies and as a legal secretary. In 2004, she enrolled in the paralegal program at OCC with a desire to go to law school following graduation.

Her paralegal studies were interrupted when she received news that her husband, Sgt. Duane Dreasky, was badly wounded in Irag when an explosive device (IED) hit his Humvee when he was on patrol with four other Michigan soldiers near el-Habbanlyah, Irag. Sgt. Dreasky suffered burns over 75 percent of his body. He was air-lifted to Landstuhl, Germany, and ultimately to the burn unit at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

Mandeline was with her in-laws at their home when she received news of her husband’s injuries. She immediately dropped studies to be at his bedside. During the eight months that her husband struggled with his injuries, she remained with him. She became a volunteer with the Judge Advocate General’s office at the Brooke Army Medical Center,

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living on the grounds to be close to him. On July 10, 2006, Sgt. Duane Dreasky, nearly eight months after he was admitted to the burn center, died of his wounds.

Sgt. Dreasky's parents, Cheryl and Roger, and Mandeline were drawn together during these eight difficult months. Since their son's death, they have remained Mandeline's greatest boosters, encouraging her in her legal studies. Her mother-in-law, Cheryl, stood with her as she received her award from Judge Mester.

"Her devotion to her family and military experiences are indicative of her strength of character. She is a role model for those in our program, let alone for all of us," said Kolly.

Judge Mester said that he was honored that the college chose to name the award after him, but he was more honored to present it to Mandeline Dreasky who not only represents the quality of students graduating from the program, but more importantly, the best of our young people today who volunteer to serve their country.

"She is truly representative of the quality of the courage and strength of character of the men and women who proudly wear the uniform of the military services today," said Mester.

Mandeline is establishing a foundation in her husband's name to fund scholarships for Walled Lake students, in addition to helping special needs children and Special Olympics.

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An electronic photograph of Mandeline, her mother-in-law, Cheryl Dreasky, and Judge Mester at the event is available. For a copy, please contact Marcia Travis at travism@oakgov.com

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