

Michael McLaughlin serves as the County Veterans Service Officer for Blue Earth County assisting veterans and their dependents access their earned benefits. Michael grew up in Mankato and is the son of Theresa and Tom McLaughlin. His father Tom is Vietnam veteran who served as an infantryman with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines before being severely wounded by enemy small arms fire during the Tet Offensive. After high school Michael enlisted in the Marine Corps as an infantryman serving with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines deploying in 2004 and 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Michael married his wife Megan in 2006. They returned home to Mankato, Minnesota in 2007 where Michael attended Minnesota State University. After he completed his bachelor's degree Michael worked in the private mining sector in southern Minnesota. He eventually decided to switch careers so he could work with his fellow veterans taking a job with Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (VA SSVF provider) as the only homeless veterans outreach worker for the lower 37 Counties of Minnesota. He started his current position as a County Veterans Service Officer in 2016. Michael was appointed the VA Secretary's Rural Health Advisory Committee in 2016 and served until 2022. He was the recipient of the 2017 Minnesota Humanities Center Veteran on the Rise award. In 2023, Michael was recognized by his peers across the country and received both the NACVSO's Distinguished CVSO and President's Award. He currently serves on the Mankato City Council representing Ward 1. Michael and Megan still reside in Mankato, and they have three children, Carly, Marcus, and Erin.