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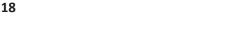
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What Can IDo?



e are thrilled to highlight our "Military-Serving Leaders of the Year" (page 10) in our Military Appreciation Issue. These impressive people, organizations and one incredible four-legged friend will inspire you and motivate us all to ask, "What can I do to make a difference?"

The heroics of Medal of Honor recipient Army Captain Larry L. Taylor will have you glued to your seat. A recount of one of his 2,000 combat missions included "a feat that had never been attempted but was deemed impossible." We celebrate Taylor and his service on page 34.

We sit down with Cole Hauser to learn why serving the military is in his blood. The stories his late grandfather, Milton Sperling, a WW II Marine, shared during Hauser's childhood set him on a path to donating his time and treasure to The Special Forces Warrior Foundation and supporting military families. "I feel a need as an American to serve the military," Hauser said. On page 56, learn how he applies his *Yellowstone* Rip-like candor and loyalty to USO tours and visits at Walter Reed.

I am humbled to read about all the people dedicating themselves to improving their communities. I march into 2024 devoted to doing more, in large and small ways, to make our world a better place. I invite you to join me.

Better together,

Danielle Jackola

Managing Editor, U.S. Veterans Magazine

Director of Veteran Affairs









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Military-Serving Leaders of the Year

So many veterans, spouses, businesses, organizations and advocates work tirelessly to provide for the needs of our veteran communities. This year, we are recognizing just some of the remarkable groups and individuals who have made an impact in the last year.





Veteran of the Year: Barry Jesinoski

This year, we recognize Barry Jesinoski, the national adjutant to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization. He served with the Marine Corps during the Persian Gulf War era. Since working for the organization, Jesinoski has given his all to ensure the wellbeing of veterans, especially those with disabilities. In addition to creating resources for employment and entrepreneurship, Jesinoski implemented the Transition Service Program and Service Officer Certification Training and championed benefit enhancements throughout the company. He was directly responsible for DAV's performance and retention program, flexible work schedules, accelerated PTO allotments and bereavement and parental leave. Through his leadership, he has grown DAV's outreach efforts, diversified its fundraising and made it easier for the company to reach the veterans who need their services most.

Service Dog of the Year: Maverick, the Therapy Dog

Along with the brave humans who have served our country, we also want to recognize the four-legged friends who do their part for the community. Recognized as the American Human Therapy Dog of the Year is Maverick, a six-year-old Great Dane from Saint Robert, Missouri. A part of the USO, Maverick is an Honorary Chief Warrant Officer Five (CW5) stationed at Fort Leonard Wood. He spends his days supporting service members on suicide watch, comforting grieving family members, helping people who are struggling with different mental and physical health issues and escorting children to military funerals alongside their families. Maverick is also a cancer survivor who supports his owner and USO Center Manager, Kelly Brownfield, as she undergoes treatment for her own cancer diagnosis.

Source: American Humane Society



Accepting Nominations for our 2025 Service Dog of the Year

Do you know an extraordinary service dog? Nominate it for our 2025 Service Dog of the Year. Please include photos, the dog and owner's names and what makes this four-legged friend amazing. The winner and their owner will be featured in the magazine! Submissions will be accepted until Nov. 1, 2024—email nrodgers@ diversity comm.net with the subject line: 2025 Service Dog of the Year.





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As a comedian, internet personality and military spouse, it's no surprise that Ashley Gutermuth would be our Spouse of the Year. While primarily known as a stand-up comedian who has performed on *The Tonight Show* and been endorsed by Jerry Seinfeld, Gutermuth's most beloved content centers around her experiences as a military spouse. Both informative and relatable, Gutermuth's videos have garnered over 300 million views, gaining the attention of big-name veteran outlets, military-friendly businesses and famous comedians alike. She has used her growing platform to speak at veteran and active-duty service events and become a source of encouragement within these communities.

Source: Ashley Gutermuth Official Website



Veteran-Owned Business of the Year: Black Rifle Coffee Company

Black Rifle Coffee Company is more than just a caffeinated business; it's a resource, community and friend. Established in 2014 by former U.S. Green Beret Evan Hafer, Black Rifle Coffee Company prides itself on creating a product using the mindset Hafer earned in service and actively gives back to the veteran community. A percentage of all proceeds go back to supporting our troops and first responders through nonprofit charity organizations. The company also prides itself on prioritizing veteran hiring at its many locations across the United States and assisting veterans looking to start their own businesses. Black Rifle Coffee Company also publishes videos, podcast episodes and blog posts providing advice and success stories for veterans and their families. A company that puts 110% toward supporting veterans at every turn, Black Rifle Coffee Company is our 2023 Veteran-Owned Business of the Year.

Source: Black Rifle Coffee Company



Military-Friendly Company of the Year: Home Depot

This year's Military-Friendly Company of the Year is The Home Depot (Home Depot), and we're honoring their work through The Home Depot Foundation. The nonprofit arm of Home Depot, the foundation works to improve the homes and lives of U.S. veterans and communities impacted by natural disasters. Most notably, The Home Depot Foundation has pledged a whopping \$750 million investment to veteran causes to be distributed fully by 2030. Additionally, Home Depot specializes in repairing, building and funding affordable homes for veterans to decrease the veteran homeless population. Home Depot is also a popular employer of veterans, service members and their families and even provides job training for tradespeople looking to break into the industry.

Source: The Home Depot Foundation

Volunteer of the Year: Brenda Seubert

One of the seven recipients of the Spirit of Hope award for 2023, Brenda Seubert from the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's 838th Transportation Battalion, is our Volunteer of the Year. A former Marine who began her federal civilian career in 2007, Seubert has spent countless hours volunteering in schools in service of the Kaiserslautern Military Community in Germany and assisted Ukrainian refugees living in Poland during November of 2022. As part of a mission trip to the Eilm Christian Center in Lwowek Slaski, Poland. Seubert tended to the Polish community's physical and spiritual needs while aiding 75 Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Source: U.S. Army





Veteran Advocate of the Year: The Gary Sinise Foundation

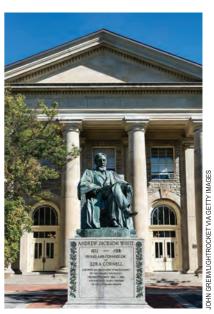
In 2011, actor Gary Sinise founded The Gary Sinise Foundation with one goal: to support and advocate for our nation's service people, veterans, first responders and their families. Thirteen years later, The Gary Sinise Foundation is doing all that and more. Dedicated to the well-being of veterans, the Gary Sinise Foundation has worked tirelessly by building homes, caring for Gold Star Families, raising money, serving meals, visiting hospitals, helping students, gifting accessible equipment and establishing programs that are designed to entertain, educate, provide for and strengthen our veteran communities. They also have partnerships with Fortune 500 companies, veteran small businesses and nonprofit organizations to fulfill their mission in every sense possible.

Source: The Gary Sinise Foundation

Yellow Ribbon School of the Year: **Cornell University**

Every year, U.S. News keeps a ranking of the best colleges to attend for military veterans based on affordability and benefits for veterans. This year, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, was rated the Top Yellow Ribbon School for Veterans. Besides supporting the GI Bill and participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program, Cornell is known for its active veteran community by holding meetings, luncheons and other events to help the student veterans on campus. There is even a whole housing unit dedicated to veteran students living on campus, a summer program for incoming students to connect with other veterans and a resource guide for managing college life as a veteran. Besides its high ranking for being veteran-friendly, Cornell was also named a top national university, a best-value school and one of the country's leading business programs.

Sources: U.S. News, Cornell University



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Money-Saving Guide-Military Discounts All Year

When it comes to special offers and discounts, your status as a veteran or active-duty service member gets you more than the special discounts available on Veterans Day. Many retailers, restaurants, services and more offer special benefits for military personnel and their families every day of the year. Here's a look at some of the best perks you can take advantage of year around.

Please note that the discounts below may require a military ID. Discounts that can be redeemed by spouses and dependents will be noted as such. Discounts that require a Veterans Advantage membership will also be noted.

Airlines & Transportation

- Alaska Airlines: Special rates for service members traveling on an official excused absence, various other discounts available with a Veterans Advantage membership.
- Amtrak: 10% off, also applicable to military families.
- American Airlines: 10% off when enrolled in VetRewards, must have Veterans Advantage membership.
- Avis: Up to 35% off car rentals, also available to military spouses.
- Enterprise: Discounts available, rate dependent on needs.
- Hertz: 10% off.
- Greyhound: 10% off tickets.
- Jet Blue: 5% off, must have Veterans Advantage membership.
- Southwest Airlines: Discounts available but can only be retrieved by calling 1-800-I-FLY-SWA.
- United Airlines: 5% off, one free checked bag, must have Veterans Advantage membership.

Automobiles

- **BMW:** Receive between \$500 and \$2,000 toward a vehicle lease or purchase, also available to military spouses.
- Ford: Special offers on vehicles and programs through the Ford Military Appreciation Program.
- Honda: \$500 toward purchases and leases on new vehicles.
- Hyundai: \$500 toward purchase on vehicles.
- Mazda: \$500 toward purchases, free vehicle inspection and oil changes.
- Nissan: Save between \$500 and \$1,000 with the Nissan Military Program.
- Subaru: \$500 discount on the best price offer within 12 months of your date of separation.
- Toyota: \$500 money back on vehicle purchases.
- Volkswagen: \$500 toward purchase on vehicles.

Entertainment

- AMC Theaters: Discount dependent on location, also available to military families, may require Veterans Advantage.
- Busch Gardens: Discounts dependent on location.
- Cinemark: Discount dependent on location.
- Disney Parks: Special rates on select days for those living inthate.
- Legoland: Differing discounts available for admission and sometimes lodging, also available to military families.
- National Parks: Free entrance to over 2,000 recreational areas, also applicable to Gold Star Families.
- Regal Cinemas: Discount dependent on location, also available to military families.
- San Diego Zoo: Free one-day admission to active military personnel only, 10% off for dependents with ID.
- Six Flags: 20% off general admission tickets, also available to military spouses.

Hotels

- Hyatt: 10-15% off your stay at most locations, also available to family members. Use code MILVET when booking.
- IHG Hotels: At least 5% off, dependent on location.
- La Quinta Hotels: 12% off best available rate.
- Red Roof Inn: 10% off or 20% with Veterans Advantage.

- Super 8: 15% off best available rate.
- Wyndham Hotels: 12% off best rates, additional discounts and rewards available.

Restaurants

- Applebee's: 10% off.
- Ben & Jerry's: Varying discounts between 10-15% off.
- Boston Market: 20% off.
- Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.: 10% off.
- Buffalo Wild Wings: 10% off.
- Cinnabon: 15% off.
- Dave & Buster's: 15% off food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- **Denny's:** 10-20% off depending on location.
- Famous Dave's BBQ: 15% off.
- Golden Corral: 20% off.
- Hard Rock Café: 15% off all non-alcoholic items and gift store purchases.
- IHOP: 20% off at most locations.
- Longhorn Steakhouse: 10% off.
- Noodles & Company: 15% off.
- Popeye's: 20% off, can be combined with other coupons.
- Texas de Brazil: 15% off, also applicable to teachers and EMS.

Services

- American Express: Waived annual fees for all credit cards.
- AT&T: 25% off unlimited wireless plans. Plans starting at less than \$27 a month for four lines.
- Disney+: 25% off annual subscriptions through ShopMyExchange.com.
- HelloFresh: 55% off your first box, 15% off boxes for the rest of the year.
- Microsoft: 10% off select products, also available to family members
- Paramount+: 25% off for life of the subscription.
- PODS (Moving and Storage): Up to 10% off.
- Samsung: 30% off products and services.
- Sprint T-Mobile: 50% off family lines.

Retail

- Adidas: 30% off online and in-store.
- Apple: 10% off products and accessories, also available to family members.
- Bass Pro Shop: 10% off.Carhartt: 15% off.
- Champion: 10% off.
- Game Stop: 10% off.
- Helly Hansen: 35% off through Helly Hansen Military Discount Program.
- Hewlett-Packard (HP): 40% off shipping costs.
- Home Depot: 10% off with the Military Discount and Appreciation Program.
- Karen Kane: 20% off.Levi Strauss: 15% off.
- Lowe's: 10% off.
- Old Navy: 10% off online purchases.
- **Reebok:** 50% off, also available for first responders.
- Under Armour: 20% off, also available to family members.

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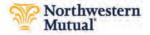
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Not Just a "Plane" Job

Take off with an aviation career

For those with aviation
experience from their time
in the service, you have a critical
skillset the commercial aviation
industry seeks. Take Mark
Rutledge, an Air Force veteran
pilot and commercial airline pilot
who took his childhood dream
of flying and transformed it into
service and a civilian career. U.S.
Veterans Magazine sat down with
Rutledge to discuss his careers
and how you can use his story
to help your own aviation career
"takeoff."

How and when did you realize you wanted to be a pilot?

Ironically, my parents told me I dreamt of flying well before I was old enough to have memories. As early as two years old, or thereabouts, I was enthralled with anything in the air...balloons, leaves, paper airplanes and airplanes flying. So, I credit my first flying vision to my Creator.

At that time, we lived in South San Jose, California, and we often drove by San Francisco International Airport. Since car seatbelts were not required in those days, I remember standing up in the back seat and looking at





all the airplanes taking off and landing. I remember gazing at the emblazoned letters spelling the name of one of the major airlines of today. I must have known then the dream to fly for that airline, even when we moved further north near the California-Oregon border.

What made you want to transition from the Air Force to work for commercial airlines as a pilot?

I need to start with what made me choose the Air Force in the first place. And that answer is pretty simple: my parents were self-employed, and we were a lower-middle-class family (not a lot of extra money). The Northern California area I grew up in was extremely isolated compared to any metro area. If I wanted to fly jets, I needed a way to get the training and experience required to qualify for those jet jobs and to do so without having to spend money we didn't have. It was a miracle that my congressman at the time had started an aviation program at my high school to earn a pilot's license. I was the last student at my high school to earn the pilot license before the program was cut for lack of funding. Not only did that program allow me to earn the pilot license, but it also opened the door with my congressman.

I decided to enroll at the United States Air Force Academy after high school, which at the time guaranteed entrance to the USAF Undergraduate Pilot Training upon graduation. In truth, I was a long shot to complete the Academy based on the level of academics available at my high school at that time. Still, my congressman pushed extremely hard to give me a chance, and I'm blessed to have been able to make it through the Academy.

The Academy's stated mission was to inspire its graduates to a long military career. I accepted that message and, for a time, dropped the idea of an airline career. But life has a way of redirecting you to the course perfect for your life. After nearly 13 years as an Air Force officer, I realized serving full-time in the active-duty Air Force could be converted to serving as a traditional reservist and pursuing my original airline dream. There was only one airline I wanted, one to which I applied, one that interviewed me, and I spent over 24 years as a pilot for that airline while finishing 15 years as a USAF Reservist.

How did the skills and experiences you acquired in the Air Force contribute to your success as a commercial pilot?

"Contribute" is not the correct "C" word; "critical" is the only word for the skill sets in my story. I knew I needed the military to give me the training and education I needed, but I didn't really know what specific skills I would learn to allow the dream to become real.

It might be cliche to say, but the leadership lessons I learned were critical and could all be attributed to the military. But it's more than just the generic leadership we pin to the uniform; it's also specific scenarios within the military operation that give us the repetition—both from failure and from success—needed to



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stand in front of the mirror and become the accountable pilot and leader needed in the cockpit, whether in civilian life or in the military.

By no means do I limit these skills from pilots without military training and background. However, because of the pace of the military operation versus most other civilian experiences, the ability to condense and learn the elite level of skills may occur more quickly than through civilian development. Eventually, and this is important, every pilot-whether starting as a civilian or military—can attain the same elite level of aviator professionalism and skill.

What challenges did you face during your career transition, and how did you overcome them?

There is always the unknown as to whether the civilian job you desire will desire you. The biggest challenge I faced was my own self-talk to find excuses as to why that job-or, in my case, the airline I chose—may not choose me. So, without being arrogant and off-putting, the challenge to be confident starts and ends in our minds.

I've learned there is really only one thing we are allowed to control in our lives: our thoughts. We have the right and responsibility to choose the thoughts we think. It sounds easy. But the next time you feel angry or anxious, like fighting or fearful, ask yourself what thoughts you were just thinking.



More than likely, they were the thoughts themselves that caused the feelings. And controlling our thoughts in the right direction is a huge challenge.

Why do you think aviation is a great career for veterans, especially those with piloting experience?

I've been fortunate to see several major sectors in aviation over the past 43-plus years: general aviation, military, airline, small jet business charter, and now I'm in the large business jet sector flying and teaching

Gulfstream G650. "All dogs have fleas" is a favorite saying of mine. In this case, there is no perfect job out there—all jobs have fleas. But aviation offers a great mix of travel, pay, benefits and job satisfaction along with dangerous challenges and adventures. Nevertheless, I can't think of any better "office view"...and in the cockpit, I have both a window and an aisle seat!

What inspires you to become a mentor for other veterans looking to become pilots? How do you plan to support and quide them in their journey?

As we begin to realize all the blessings and benefits we receive in life, and to the extent we agree most (if not all) of those came to us outside our pure control, it becomes even more of a blessing to pay it forward. I hope one day to start a nonprofit to identify young people who dream of flying and partner with them as they pursue their dreams, whether civilian or military. A special arm of that nonprofit would be focused on identifying young enlisted military members

and guiding them directly into aviation opportunities.

What advice would you give to veterans considering an aviation career?

I offer the same advice I offered a young airborne infantry Soldier about 10 years ago: you have experience and have seen combat. Be willing to build a resume and learn to tell the stories of your combat experience. Use the Post-9/11 GI Bill to finish school, preferably at an aviation university. While earning your bachelor's degree, earn your pilot licenses (private, instrument, commercial, instructor, multi-engine, etc.).

Once you've done this, very few Air National Guard and flying Air Force/Naval Reserve units would pass on the chance to interview you. Why, you ask? Because most of these military aviation units only study what you may have already done. And for them to have you as part of their unit adds real-life experience—gives you serious "street cred,"—which most pilots only know through reading.





we salute your service.

At Altria, we appreciate and honor the men and women of the Armed Forces and their family members who have courageously stood beside them in support. We are proud to support our military employees, military and veteran employee resource group, and veteran businesses as they support those who have served.



Transition Tips from a Transitioned Vet

fter serving with the U.S. Army, Mario Farfan gained 22 years of experience in business development and community outreach. He has experience working in key banking roles, including as regional manager and branch manager throughout the Chicago, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin markets. In addition, Farfan founded the Northwest Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (NWHCC), an organization that combines his expertise in business with his stalwart support of his community. U.S. Veterans Magazine (USVM) had the opportunity to speak with Farfan about his work and his advice for applying military skills to jobs in the civilian sector.

USVM: In 2015, you founded the NWHCC with a direct focus on business development in the Latino market. Can you tell us about NWHCC, the need you identified in the Latino market and the impact you've seen so far?

Mario Farfan (MF): NWHCC is a regional chamber that covers DuPage, Lake, Kane and suburban Cook counties. We specifically focus on owners of Hispanic-owned businesses, but we are open to all businesses that are looking for additional resources to help sustain and grow them. The needs that were identified were access to capital, marketing and representation. Many business owners did not feel welcomed in the events or meetings. The impact we created was a call to action for the needs mentioned above. Our chamber has been able to open doors, expand networks and provide access to resources for our communities.

USVM: You are devoted to

expanding your knowledge about the communities you serve and your connections to create an impact. Why is this important to you?

MF: I want to ensure that business grows in Illinois and. more specifically, within the minority communities. I also want to see more inclusivity across the board. If we are all more open-minded and can learn from each other, this will attract new business and create a great future for everyone!

USVM: Many people feel a loss of identity when they transition from the military and need some support in determining what to do next. You have been extremely successful in blending your professional expertise with your passion for service. Can you share some advice for someone trying to identify their

MF: It is certainly not easy and did not come right away. My strong recommendation is to find and join groups that help veterans and start to look at mentor groups. In 2024, there are way more groups out there than when I got out in 1999. I would say start there; after that, you must network. Find local chambers or groups and create a LinkedIn profile that was key for me.

USVM: What is the best way for someone currently serving to begin translating the vast amount of experience they have gained into skills that company recruiters are looking for?

MF: I go back to LinkedIn. Numerous recruiters and companies are looking for veterans. There are also several good groups out there to research that can help. You must start networking early!

USVM: What is next on the horizon for you?

MF: I continue to look at other opportunities to serve and support. I am working on a veterans' chamber soon, so stay tuned for that!









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Aviation Companies Hiring Veterans

By Natalie Rodgers





Delta Airlines

Delta Airlines is one of the world's oldest and largest airlines, with nearly 99 years of operation. Delta is a leader in supporting veteran events and has some of the highest hiring rates for veterans. As reported in 2022, about 11% of Delta's 80,000 employees served in the military in some capacity. Other supports Delta gives to its veterans include:

■ Military Skills Translator: Launched in partnership with military.com, the

Military Skills Translator allows veterans to input their experience in service and translate those skills into civilian terms. This tool enables veterans to find jobs at Delta that match their expertise.

- Veteran Business Resource Group: An inclusive network of veterans, military spouses and military family member employees within the company.
- FourBlock Partnership: Partnering with the nonprofit FourBlock,

Delta provides transition assistance for military and veteran employees coming to work for the airline.

Southwest **Airlines**

Founded in 1967. Southwest Airlines is the world's largest low-cost airline carrier. They are headquartered in Dallas. Texas and are one of the top companies for hiring veterans and spouses. Over 10,200 veterans and at least 1,800 military spouses work for the company. They also offer an array of programs to assist in the transitioning period, including:

- Warrior Hire Program: A transitioning program that actively works to hire veterans into their technology department.
- Destination 225: Additional training for military aviators to expand their skills in civilian flying.
- Military Ambassadors: Veteran employees who serve to provide support for veterans, spouses and their

families through shared experience.

American Airlines

Another Texas-based airline. American Airlines, is one of the largest of its kind and performs almost 6,800 daily flights to over 350 destinations. American Airlines currently employs over 7,000 members who are veterans or are serving with the reserves in every capacity, from aviators and tech operations to management positions and customer service representatives. Programs they offer to support their commitment to veterans include:

- Veterans Military Employee Business Resource Group: Support programs for veterans, reservists and spouses to connect with other military personnel working at American Airlines.
- Partnerships: American Airlines is a proud partner with the Gary Sinise Foundation, Medal of Honor







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Check your local listings and go to www.americasalutesyou.org for tv network coverage starting 1/20/24

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Foundation and the George W. Bush Institute to expand on support for veteran employees and customers at American Airlines.

■ Flight Support: Discounts on tickets, free bag checks and priority boarding are available for veterans and active-duty service members. recruiting and training veteran employees and implementing the buddy mentorship program.

■ Benefits: United provides social and professional development opportunities for all its employees along with financial and health benefits.

JetBlue

The youngest airline of those listed, JetBlue was founded in 1998 and operates over 1,000 daily flights to 100 domestic and international destinations. The airline also prioritizes hiring veteran employees and ensures their retention at the company through the following programs:

■ Vets in Blue Program: Provides training, resources and networking opportunities with other veterans at the company and works to recruit veteran talent through partnerships

and events.

■ Gateway Rotor Transition Program (RTP): A specialized training program for veterans with aviation experience to acquire the skills they need for their job as a JetBlue first officer.

Alaska Airlines

In 1932, Alaska Airlines was founded and has since become the fifth-largest airline in America, with five hubs and over 100 travel destinations from its West Coast headquarters. Along with their sister company, Horizon Airlines, the two companies have long been dedicated to recruiting veteran talent. In 2016, Alaska Airlines reported that 15% of the veterans who applied for work at their company were hired (as opposed to the 12.2% for nonveterans) and that employees with a military background showed a higher promotion rate. Alaska Airlines works to support veteran employees through the following:

Veteran and Military Business Resource Group: Similar to American Airlines' program, Alaska provides a network of veteran employees within the company to support one another. This program also offers opportunities for career development, apprenticeship, networking and community outreach.

There will be ≈18,000 openings per year for commercial pilots this decade, with many of those replacing retirees.

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics]

- Partnerships: In collaboration with the Honor Flight Network, they provide complimentary and reducedfare travel for veterans on special tours of Washington, D.C. They also invite members to donate miles to their Hero Miles program, which keeps injured service members connected to their families during treatment.
- Honoring Those Who Serve Aircraft: A custom Boeing 737-900ER honoring our military and introduced as part of their Alaska Airlines Salutes program that includes a plethora of employee-led initiatives to honor those who have served.

These airlines are all committed to supporting their veteran and military spouse employees and working with them to develop programs to support those who have served.



United Airlines is the third largest airline in the country, performing numerous domestic and international flights worldwide. United Airlines is also a top recruiter for veterans and reservists, going the extra mile to ensure they feel included throughout the transition process. Some perks reserved especially for military personnel include:

- United4Veterans: A specialty veteran recruiting program at United.
- United4Veterans Resource Group: Responsible for



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The Significance of Emotional **Regulation in Transition**

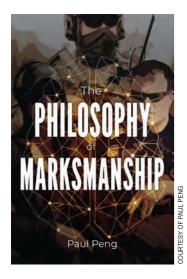
By Paul Peng

hances are if you are Creading this article, let alone this magazine, you have served sometime in the military or are tied to the military indirectly in some fashion. First and foremost, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for your service and the sacrifice your loved ones have made, in service of this nation. Do me a favor and take a moment to think about when you first left the military; the moment you got that final DD214 in your hand and/or the last day you wore the uniform. What feelings went through you? Was it relief? Happiness? Ecstasy?

Now fast forward four months. Now that the high of leaving the service has faded and the reality of civilian transition has kicked into full gear, how are you feeling now? A little depressed? Overwhelmed? Anxious? Perhaps even a little angry?

Emotional Regulation

Out of all the challenges that will be thrown your way during your transition period



out of the military, emotional regulation is, in my opinion, one of the hardest challenges to overcome. Failure to keep this one in check can lead to a host of problems for you, such as but not limited to: extreme anger (i.e., going from 0 to 10 in a split second), depression, isolation, mood swings and anxiety. Which can then lead to other bad events, such as drug addiction and/or alcoholism and overall relationship issues.

I can speak from experience because I personally experienced severe depression, isolation, anger and anxiety shortly after discharging from service. Individual therapy and group therapy helped to an extent, but it felt (at least to me) more like a band-aid than a permanent fix. As long as you kept going on a weekly basis you felt ok, not great, but ok. The minute you stop going, the tendency to relapse back to the "darkness" increases tremendously.

There is no one-size-fitsall approach to achieving emotional regulation after leaving service. Many transitioning veterans feel lost and oftentimes do not feel like they are properly equipped or supported to handle the plethora of stresses regarding military transition.

Here is an opinion: many veterans already have the tools for success that were learned throughout their time in service. One of these is marksmanship.

Emotional Regulation & Marksmanship

Marksmanship is something that is drilled into you in the military. This is especially true if you served in combat





arms or combat arms support in the Marines or Army. To hit your intended target, you must have good sight picture, trigger press and follow through. For all three of these aspects of marksmanship to be performed properly, you must regulate your emotions through breathing and purposed concentration. Breathing regulation allows for the heartbeat to slow, providing the relaxation your body needs and preventing such symptoms as shaky or sweaty hands. You must also focus on your grip, stance, target and, most importantly, your trigger press and follow through with no other distractions to hit your target and achieve optimal results (hitting the 9 or 10 ring of your target). Your mind must be clear. When your mind is clear and focused on nothing

but achieving the task at hand, you have, in essence, achieved emotional regulation.

Let me be clear: I am not suggesting that marksmanship is the only way to achieve emotional regulation; there are many veterans' organizations that offer a variety of recreational activities such as horseback riding, fishing, hiking or meditation—all requiring the same focus, concentration and emotional regulation.

All I am conveying here is that many veterans already have the foundational building blocks and tools needed to achieve emotional regulation when receiving their final DD214 in hand and are discharged from service. Sometimes, they just need to be reminded that it is there.



A recently published book talks about emotional regulation as one of the fundamental truths behind marksmanship. If you want to get a copy of the book, scan the QR code.

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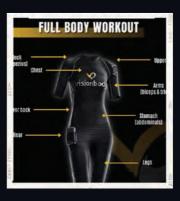
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Mission-Critical Recruitment:

Meeting Veterans Where They Are

By John Register

s a professional keynote Aspeaker specializing in How to Amputate Fear and Transform Adversity into Advantage, I understand veterans' fears when transitioning to civilian life. The daunting question, "Who am I now?" and uncertainties about identity post-military service are rampant. However, these fears can be mitigated by job recruiters who value military personnel's unique skills and resilience. These recruiters can craft strategic approaches to integrate military veteran talent into the civilian workforce.

My recent encounter at Dallas Love Field Airport's USO with GySgt Brian Schiller (Ret.), who played a role in helping me develop the Paralympic Military Sports Program in San Antonio, Texas, underscores this point. While many veterans from this program have succeeded, others still struggle. Schiller, now employed with the Department of Homeland Security, which has numerous job openings, shared some insights into attracting and retaining military veteran talent.

"Recruiters must identify the veteran's next purpose. A sense of purpose and achievement drives veterans. Understanding what this means to each individual is key to garnering their interest.

"Secondly, recruiters should define this purpose clearly, offering a roadmap for career progression that allows veterans to continue feeling the sense of accomplishment they experienced in the military.



"Third, since veterans have committed themselves to defending the U.S. Constitution, recruiters should demonstrate how their potential new role relates to their service. The challenge lies in transitioning from a military priority of survival and brotherhood to finding a similar urgency and purpose in civilian roles. Creating a culture that mirrors this sense of purpose is crucial. Recruiters can effectively attract a wealth of veteran talent by cultivating a new sense of purpose that resonates with veterans' values and experiences," Schiller concluded.

I went through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) at BAMC. Many civilian job recruiters came to the TAP course to help retiring veterans navigate and transition successfully to civilian life. Like TAPS, the solemn bugle call played at military funerals signifies the end of a Soldier's journey; the TAP marks the

closing of one chapter and the beginning of a new chapter for the veteran. Recruiters need to understand the skills honed in the military, especially the ability to prioritize missions, are invaluable assets in the civilian workforce.

Recruiters stressed this alignment of military discipline with corporate objectives, helping veterans see the significance of our military skills in a new light.

In addition to helping veterans find their purpose, recruiters need to develop a strategy to meet the veterans where they are. The presence of recruiters on-site made my transition process approachable and convenient and helped me transfer my identity from Soldier to civilian. Some people had worn the uniform and cared about the transition of their military brother or sister. Meeting veterans where they are demonstrates empathy,

and the change feels less daunting for veterans.

Another way our recruiters helped us prepare for job interviews was by suggesting we go out and practice live interviews for jobs we did not desire. This way, there was less pressure in the job interview for the job we wanted. Recruiters suggested we practice the technique they gave us when the stakes were low, just like military training before deployment.

We all know it is very stressful leaving the military. I remember my first interview using the recruiter's strategy: applying for a city bus driver job in San Antonio. I knew the HR folks were never going to hire a one-legged man. Do you know I did so well in the interview I received a callback? I respectfully declined to go back for the second interview. That incident proved to me I was in more control than I first believed.

Recruiters need to understand there is a mapping gap. Translating military experience into civilian job language is one of the most significant hurdles. Recruiters who participated in the TAP were adept in interpreting military resumes and mapping skills and roles to civilian job requirements. This expertise is critical in helping veterans find suitable positions that match their skills and experiences. And they need to do it with enlisted and officer jobs. Understanding how to map job skills gives veterans more confidence in their transition.

In today's market, recruiters need to know how to teach veterans to use generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to research companies or the people they are going to interview with. They need to assist them with online tools such as LinkedIn.

When I bid on a speech, I gather relevant information and gain the competitive advantage by researching the people and positions using LinkedIn. There are many ways to stay online. Although online tools were not as prevalent during my transition, the landscape has changed drastically. Today, recruiters are using these tools and training veterans to

play a significant role in equipping them with these essential skills.

Finally, recruiters must provide mentorship and networking opportunities in the post-transition support. This was a cornerstone of the TAP experience. Recruiters offered after-hours mentoring,

The challenge lies in transitioning from a military priority of survival and brotherhood to finding a similar urgency and purpose in civilian roles. Creating a culture that mirrors this sense of purpose is crucial."

-GySgt Schiller

be tech-savvy. With the surge in generative AI and other technological advancements, veterans must stay competitive in the digital realm. Recruiters

demonstrating a commitment to the long-term success of us veterans. This ongoing support ensures a smooth transition and sustained success in

civilian careers.

A veteran's journey is a testament to the practical strategies that can facilitate the transition from military to civilian life. It underscores the importance of understanding and valuing military experience, providing targeted support and ensuring veterans have the necessary tools and knowledge for their new career paths.

As recruiters continue to support our veterans, it's essential to keep evolving these strategies, ensuring they remain relevant in an ever-changing world. The commitment to our veterans' success reflects our gratitude for their service and a recognition of the value they bring to our civilian workforce.

John Register (U.S. Army Retired) is a professional speaker who works with business professionals to Amputate Fear by Transforming Adversity into Advantage in order to Win Life's Medals. To book Register to speak for your next event, please visit johnregister.com.



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Top 10 Tips to Workforce Transition

By Larry Broughton

TA hen one door closes, a grand boulevard openssuch is the journey from military to civilian workforce. And who says it needs to be a solemn march? Let's face it: swapping combat boots for slip-on loafers can feel like stepping into an alternate universe where 'uniform' often means a questionable collection of ties. So, let's navigate this transition with a dose of inspiration and a solid plan. Here are the top 10 tips to successfully march into the civilian workforce:

EMBRACE YOUR INNER HFRO

Your service-related skills are the superhero cape you get to wear in any industry. Problem-solving? Check. Budget wizardry? Doublecheck. Leading a team while under caffeine deprivation? That's the kind of resilience companies dream of at night.

DON'T GET BOXED IN Avoid pigeonholing yourself into the same role you had in the service if that's not your aspiration. The civilian sector is your oyster, and who doesn't like a little variety in their diet? Go try new things!

KNOW YOUR VALUE You are the Swiss Army knife in a drawer full of butter knives. Employers long for candidates who don't just show up but show up with a can-do spirit, ready to rally toward a vision and mission. You're not just another suit—you're the full armor.

GET A CIVILIAN SHERPA Transitioning is like exploring a new continent. Having a guide is priceless. Organizations like Talents AS-CEND (talentsascend.com) are an example of the compass that helps translate 'squad leader' to 'team motivator extraordinaire.' Founder and CEO Robyn Grable states, "Talents ASCEND eases the transition and translates the skills that service members possess and matches them with the employers' skills they



March forward with confidence and the knowledge that the same qualities that made you an asset to the military make you an invaluable treasure to the civilian workforce. The world beyond the barracks awaits your leadership, your vision and your indomitable spirit.

OBSERVE, ADAPT AND

Consider the corporate world as a new terrain to recon. Learn the language (pro-tip: 'synergy' is apparently vital), decode the dress code and avoid using acronyms, military time or standing at parade rest in front of your interviewer or supervisor. And for goodness' sake, refrain from responding to emails with "Roger that" unless your boss is actually named Roger.

NETWORK LIKE IT'S A REUNION

It's not just what you know or even who you know, but about who knows you and that you're on the job hunt. Connection is key to securing that next career. Consider platforms like LinkedIn and Alignable to build relationships. Rub elbows, shake hands and maybe even high-five a few people along the way. Grable says, "Talents ASCEND is not a job board and not an agency. We are, instead, a screening platform to connect employers with the military talent they know they need." So, get out there and be the talent they need to meet.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

The military taught you how to learn. Now, apply that to everything from the latest tech to understanding why everyone in the office is obsessed with a show about dancing celebrities. Every new skill is another star on your civilian epaulet.

PATIENCE, GRASSHOPPER

Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, your transition may take longer than a 24-hour ops cycle. It's a marathon, not a sprint—unless it's one of those days when the coffee machine is broken.

EMBRACE TECH

You've mastered gadgets that could be straight out of a spy movie. Civilian tech should be a walk in the park.

KEEP YOUR ESSENCE

You're not just leaving the service; you're adding to your life story. You bring unique values and experiences that will enrich any workplace like a secret ingredient in the corporate chili.

Incorporating these tips into your transition strategy can turn an intimidating change



into an exciting new mission. Remember, companies aren't just looking for employees; they're looking for leaders, team members, problemsolvers and those with the fortitude to face challenges head-on-all trademarks of a military career.

As Grable highlights, "The Talents ASCEND organization has hundreds, if not thousands, of matches between employers and transitioning military service members per day, based on skills, location and salaries." This is no mere chance. It's a testament to the precision and effectiveness of aligning military-bred skills with civilian needs.

Your transition to the civilian workforce is more than a change of scenery: it's an opportunity to redefine your mission and apply your formidable skills to new challenges. It's about building on the legacy of your military service to create success in another sphere. This isn't just a transition; it's a transformation, an evolution into yet another version of your remarkable self.

The civilian workforce is ripe for the unique blend of discipline, leadership and adaptability that veterans bring to the table. It's a landscape where your skills and proven leadership will not only be recognized but revered. Every strategic plan you craft, every team you lead and every challenge you tackle with unflappable spirit adds immense value to your new employer.

In Grable's words, "Skillsbased assessments and hiring practices reduce imposter syndrome," empowering you to own your new chapter. The camaraderie, shared missions and purpose that defined your military experience have echoes in this new frontier.

March forward with the assurance that your journey continues with every handshake, every interview and every challenge met with resilience. The civilian sector awaits not just a former service member but a future leader.

Your transition is your next great campaign, and you're well-armed for success. So, march forward with confidence and the knowledge that the same qualities that made you an asset to the military make you an invaluable treasure to the civilian workforce. The world beyond the barracks awaits your leadership, your vision and your indomitable

Welcome to the next chapter, where your past is your greatest asset, and your future is as bright as the highest commendation. Stand tall. Your new mission awaits, and it's one you're fully equipped to excel in.

Larry Broughton is a former U.S. Army Green Beret, best-selling author, awardwinning entrepreneur, keynote speaker and leadership mentor. For more information, visit LarryBroughton.com.

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Mar. 20	Denver 1 - In Person
Mar. 22	HEALTHCARE/ALLIED/NURSING VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR
Mar. 27	Phoenix - In Person
Apr. 3	DC / Virginia - In Person
Apr. 10	San Francisco - In Person
Apr. 24	Chicago 1 - In Person
May 8	Boston - In Person
May 17	LAW ENFORCEMENT & VETERA VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR
May 29	New York - In Person
June 5	Sacramento - In Person
June 12	Atlanta - In Person
June 21	HIGH TECH & ENGINEERING VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR
June 26	Silicon Valley - In Person
July 10	West Hollywood - In Person
July 17	Dallas - In Person
July 25	Seattle 2 - In Person
July 31	Orange County - In Person
Aug. 7	Denver 2 - In Person
Aug. 21	Portland 2 - In Person
Aug. 28	Inland Empire - In Person
Sept. 4	Chicago 2 - In Person
Sept. 11	Bay Area 2 - In Person
Sept. 19	Milwaukee - In Person

Sept. 25 Los Angeles 2 - In Person

San Diego - In Person

Long Beach - In Person

San Fernando Valley - In Person

Oct. 2

Oct. 9

Oct. 16

Medal of Honor:

Army Captain Larry L. Taylor





Army First Lieutenant Larry L. Taylor in his UH-1 "Huey" helicopter. Taylor served in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968 with D Troop (Air), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division. He flew over 2,000 combat missions in UH-1 and Cobra helicopters.

While flying an AH1-G Cobra attack helicopter in South Vietnam, Army Captain Larry L. Taylor heard a frantic, whispered voice through his radio. The voice said, "We're surrounded, we're surrounded." It was a four-man reconnaissance team calling for aid as they were being surrounded by about 100 enemy soldiers. Taylor knew he had to answer the call, and his actions on that fateful night earned him the Medal of Honor 55 years later.

On June 18, 1968, Taylor commanded a light-fire team of two Cobra helicopter gunships to rescue the four-man team on a nighttime mission. Facing intense enemy ground fire, Taylor and his wingman flew at dangerously low heights to fight off enemy forces. They requested illumination rounds and supporting artillery to assist with identifying the enemies' positions. Over the next 45 minutes, Taylor, co-pilot Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Ratliff, and the



Medal of Honor recipient retired Army Captain Larry L. Taylor speaks during the ceremony at Conmy Hall, Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, on Sept. 6, 2023. He is accompanied by his wife, Toni Taylor.

four U.S. Soldiers on the ground fought with everything they had as the enemy increased their attacks.

With both Cobra gunships nearly out of ammunition, the enemy still closing in on the patrol team, and no sign of an evacuation helicopter, First Lieutenant Taylor continued to circle at a low level under intense enemy fire until they could find a means of escape for the reconnaissance team. Using his searchlight and fake fun runs, Taylor was able to distract the enemy from the patrol team until they were found. Once located—and already low on fuel and ammunition—Taylor decided to extract the team with his two-man Cobra helicopter gunship—a feat that had never been attempted but was deemed impossible. As his wingman fired the remaining ammo on the patrol team's east flank, Taylor fired his last Minigun rounds on the enemy positions, creating a small window of escape for their team of four.

He directed the patrol team to move 100 vards toward the extraction point, where he landed his helicopter and aided the team to safety while still under enemy fire. Taylor was able to evacuate all four men, saving all of their lives.

Besides this significant night, Taylor's service continued to encapsulate bravery and resilience. He flew over 2,000 combat missions and came under enemy fire 340 times, five of which he was forced down. After his service, Taylor continued to serve his community, becoming a teacher at a school for deaf students in Tennessee. He was active in his local chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America and frequently donated his earnings to charities such as Habitat for Humanity and organizations like the Boy Scouts of America.

81-year-old Taylor and his wife, Toni Taylor, attended his Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House in September 2023.

President Biden said of the Army Captain: "When duty called, Taylor did everything; did everything to answer. And because of that, he rewrote the fate of four families for generations to come. That's valor. That's our nation at its very best."

Taylor was also recognized at the Hall of Heroes induction ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia. At the latter ceremony, Army Secretary Christine E. Wormuth said of Taylor's service: "You have reminded us that when facing any problem, there is always a solution. And you should never give up. You have even said that if transported back in time and given the chance, you would go back to Vietnam tomorrow and save those men all over again."

Sources: Department of Defense, Wikipedia

How NVBDC Helps the Economy and the Community

The National Veteran Business
Development Council (NVBDC) is
a nonprofit organization that helps
promote and support veteran-owned
businesses in the United States.
One of the key ways that the NVBDC
accomplishes its mission is by certifying
veteran-owned businesses, a process
that can have significant benefits for
both the veteran community and the U.S.
economy as a whole.

The NVBDC was founded in 2013 to create a national standard for certifying veteran-owned businesses. Prior to the establishment of the NVBDC, there was no uniform certification process for service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses, which made it difficult for these businesses to compete for contracts and opportunities with larger corporations and government agencies. The NVBDC's certification program helps level the playing field by providing a standardized certification process that is recognized by corporations and government agencies across the country.

One of the primary benefits of NVBDC certification is that it can help veteran-owned businesses access new opportunities for growth and success. Many corporations and government agencies have programs in place to promote the hiring of service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses, and being NVBDC Certified can help these businesses stand out and secure contracts and partnerships that they might not otherwise have been able to win. By giving service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses access to new opportunities, the NVBDC helps these businesses grow and succeed, which in turn strengthens the U.S. economy as a whole.

In 2017, the Billion Dollar Roundtable (BDR) governance committee evaluated

NVBDC's certification process and recognized its program as the only accepted service-disabled and veteranowned businesses certification that meets the BDR audit standards.

The BDR Governance Committee evaluates certification organization requests on an ongoing basis as a means for recognizing greater numbers of diverse suppliers. To maintain consistency among the 39 Members of the Billion Dollar Roundtable, diverse suppliers <u>must be certified by one of these third-party certification agencies:</u>

- National Minority Supplier
 Development Council (NMSDC)
- The Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)
- National Veteran Business Development Council (NVBDC)
- Disability:IN
- National Gay Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

For BDR purposes, certified means that U.S. suppliers have been confirmed by a third-party certification agency as being at least 51% owned, operated, and controlled **by one of the five diversity** certification organizations it recognizes.

Today, 32 corporations make up the Billion Dollar Roundtable, 28 of whom are NVBDC corporate members. By demonstrating the BDR and NVBDC impact, we believe that others will embrace our vision and join us on this important mission to support our Service-Disabled and Veteran-Owned Businesses. As noted in the 2022 BDR Impact Report, the aggregate Tier I supplier diversity spend of BDR member companies increased over the past year by \$20 billion to \$96 billion.

NVBDC Certified SD/VOB 2022 Economic Impact Data for Tier 1 Spend by BDR Members.

As a result of this partnership, **Billion**

Dollar Roundtable members have spent over \$3.3 billion with NVBDC Certified SD/VOBs, creating a significant impact on the U.S. economy as shown below:

- \$3.3B Tier I Spend
- \$2B Payroll
- \$3.7B Added Value to GDP
- 44,498 # of Jobs
- \$6.7B BDR's Impact on Service-Disabled and Veteran-Owned Businesses

In addition to helping individual businesses, NVBDC certification also has broader economic benefits. Veteranowned businesses are a vital part of the U.S. economy, generating billions of dollars in revenue and creating jobs for millions of Americans. By promoting and supporting veteran-owned businesses, the NVBDC helps to create a more diverse and resilient economy, one that is better able to weather economic downturns and promote sustainable growth over the long term.

The NVBDC views entrepreneurship as another form of employment and believes that helping our veterans succeed in business helps them, their families and the communities in which they reside.

Overall, the NVBDC plays an important role in supporting the veteran community and promoting economic growth in the United States. By providing a standardized certification process for veteran-owned businesses, the NVBDC helps these businesses access new opportunities, grow, and succeed, which in turn benefits the U.S. economy as a whole. Whether you are a veteran looking to start your own business or a corporation or government agency looking to partner with a veteran-owned business, the NVBDC is an important resource that is well worth exploring.









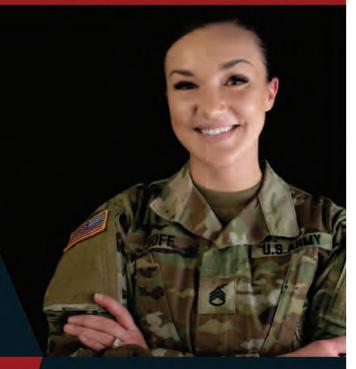








NVBDC Certification Provides Access and Opportunity for Certified SD/VOBs To Participate in a \$122 Billion Supplier Diversity Marketplace.



NVBDC.ORG

THE ORIGINAL





We are the nation's original third party authority for certification of veteran-owned businesses of all sizes and the corporations wanting to engage them. Established to address the unique challenges faced by veteran entrepreneurs, NVBDC aims to provide support, networking opportunities, and access to resources that empower veteran-owned businesses to thrive. Through its rigorous certification process, NVBDC ensures that businesses claiming veteran ownership meet the necessary criteria, thus fostering trust and promoting economic growth within the veteran business community.









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From Military Pilot to Math Ninja

By Tim Madden

career in the military has **A**many rewards, but it also has foundational relevance for a civilian career. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, around 200,000 service members transition out of the military each year. Various federal programs are designed to facilitate this transition, including helping service members achieve their education, employment and other goals, and overcome potential challenges in adjusting to civilian life. Unfortunately, many of these programs fall flat, and thousands of veterans are left without any options or viable plans to fall back on post service.

Fortunately, military experience proves to be an unmatched asset in franchising and, therefore, a thriving career option for veterans. I served for nine years on active duty in the U.S. Navy after attending Villanova University on an ROTC scholarship. While in the Navy, I completed flight school in Florida and Texas, earning my wings and becoming a naval aviator. During my time serving our country, I held many positions including aircraft commander, instructor pilot and finally, senior instructor pilot. After leaving the Navy, I became an airline pilot for JetBlue Airways out of John F. Kennedy Airport, New York, where I started as a first officer on the Airbus A320 and, within one year, became a captain.

At the time, I was one of the youngest large commercial aircraft captains in the country, but eventually, I decided to leave JetBlue Airways to tackle new challenges.

I knew that I wanted to work in a business that helps other people. My passion for teaching, leading and helping



others achieve their goals was my guiding post to finding my next adventure. I researched various brands that would not only coincide with my engineering background, but would also help educate the

time as the center director. Not only did Mathnasium align with our values and interest, but the company also values veterans, offering qualified U.S. veterans and active military a full \$10,000 off the initial

200,000 service members transition out of the military each year.

[U.S. Government Accountability Office]

youth. Mathnasium Learning Center seemed like just the type of purpose-driven business I was searching for because of its ability to meet the surging demand for math tutoring, helping kids understand math using its proprietary teaching methods like the Mathnasium Method, and providing hope and encouragement for thousands of kids struggling with math in schools today.

My wife, Pamela, and I decided to work together once we found the perfect fit, where she would own the business and I would operate it fullfranchise fee, which is a 25% discount. The corporate team saw our dedication to the brand's mission right away and knew my military training provided unique experience in leadership, time management, adapting to change, following a process and discipline—a recipe for a successful business.

My time in the military gave me the skills I needed to succeed as a business operator. The disciplinary culture of the military has influenced my leadership style at Mathnasium. With so many tasks to accomplish in the day, having a defined system in place is vital

to the success of operating a business. With franchising, you are provided a blueprint and all you have to do is follow it properly in order to provide the best experience and drive results.

The extreme focus and attention to detail it takes to be an honorable instructor pilot is very similar to how I like to lead my staff and generally operate the center. Being aware of not only your strengths, but your weaknesses, is key to running a successful business. Similar to the military, when you can rely on different individuals on your team based on their specific strengths, then you have an unstoppable, welloiled machine.

Not only was I engrained in STEM growing up, and eventually received an engineering degree, but I knew as my wife and I decided on a franchise, the best career options for students entering college today means they have to go into a STEM-based discipline (science, technology, engineering and math). By investing in Mathnasium, I'm helping kids understand math in a digestible way and always helping them shape their futures. My hope is to encourage students and show them that math can be fun and incredibly rewarding down the

My degree in engineering has taken me far past my expectations, and I hope to show students just how valuable learning these key skills is. When parents drop their kids off at our Mathnasium center, not only are they trusting that we are teaching math in a fun and understandable way, but they are investing in their child's future.

Powered by diversity and inclusion.



Meet Jon Ramsey

—from Air Force to Franchisee

A fter completing his service with the U.S. Air Force and the Air National Guard with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in hand, Jon Ramsey found himself transitioning from military service to the public sphere. After working for several large companies in human resources, Ramsey decided to be his own boss.

If your transition plans include opening a small business, you're not alone. Though a relatively new business owner, Ramsey is one of the many veterans exploring franchise ownership. U.S. Veterans Magazine sat down with Ramsey to talk about his journey thus far and how his military experience has helped him as a business owner.

After retiring from the Air Force, you became the owner of the Kiddie Academy of Charlotte-Highlands in North Carolina. What made you interested in owning a franchise?

I served four years of active duty in the Air Force and another seven years in the Air National Guard. I was honorably discharged in 2005. I am a veteran, but I'm not retired, to be clear. I was a technical sergeant (E7) when my last enlistment ended.

During the COVID-19



outbreak in 2020, I was a global human resources director for a Fortune 500 company. I had to lay off many employees that year and eventually was laid off myself. I had spent 20 years in civilian corporate leadership at that point and needed a change. So, I decided to pursue business ownership.

I considered human resources consulting. I considered owning a gym or even a shipping store. None of those were attractive to me. My spouse, Della Ramsey, has master's and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, and she has over 20 years of experience as a public school teacher and a private child care director. I have a master's degree in human

resources, a bachelor's degree in business, 20-plus years of corporate human resources leadership, plus 11 years of military experience. I decided to combine forces—my wife's child care and education expertise with my military leadership and civilian human resources experience—and go into the educational child care business with Kiddie Academy.

Many military families struggle to find high-quality, affordable child care. What inspired you to own a business that meets the child care needs of families? Do you primarily serve military families?

It is really challenging to move to a new place and find high-quality, affordable child care. My spouse and I know this all too well, having endured over 10 moves with two children in over 20 years of marriage. We have a heart for the families that are transitioning or relocating, and we are always happy to help military families however we can. One of the best ways we can help is to nurture and educate their children.

So many people take it for granted that not everyone



has a local support system to help care for children. Even families that do have that local support system can benefit from educational child care it's more than just care; it's education and preparation for success in life and future educational endeavors.

Can you tell us about VetFran and how it supports veterans interested in franchise opportunities?

It's a daunting task to start a new business. A franchise partnership may be just what is needed. It was really helpful that VetFran assisted us in obtaining the initial information we needed to research and evaluate this opportunity.

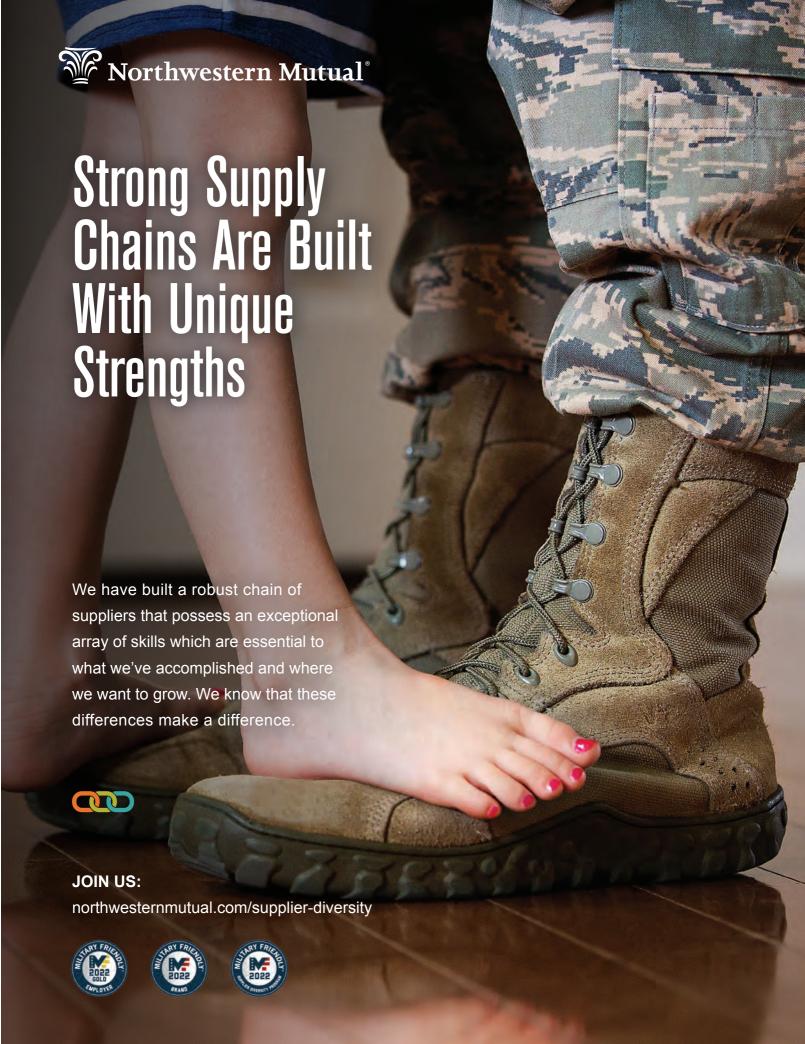
What advice would you give to a veteran who is considering owning a franchise?

Take your time; do your research; talk to family and friends. Look for the person who will say no and may even challenge the idea and listen to them closely. Don't just talk to the ones that will show you unquestioning support.

and the Air National Guard. Ramsey worked for several large companies in human resources before he and his wife opened the Kiddie Academy of Charlotte-Highlands in October 2023. They live in Charlotte, North Carolina, with their two

Jon Ramsey joined the military after high

school and served in the U.S. Air Force



News Briefs



Highly Anticipated World War II **Miniseries Drops**

A new military movie or television show comes to our screens every year, but one of the year's best ones may have already dropped. Based on John Orloff's book and events in World War II, the television adaptation of *Masters of the Air* launched on Apple TV+ in late January. Doubling the budget of the critically-acclaimed series Band of Brothers, this nine-episode series follows the men of the 100th Bomb Group in World War II, the combat they endured in taking down Hitler's Third Reich and their personal journeys during and after the war. While official reviews weren't out at the time of writing, the series became highly anticipated in late 2023 for its subject matter, budget and an all-star cast. The first few episodes began streaming on Jan. 26 with stars Austin Butler (*Elvis*), Barry Keoghan (The Banshees of Insherin) and acclaimed director Steven Spielberg's son, Sawyer Spielberg.

Sources: Apple TV+, Military.com, Wikipedia



FLIZABETH FRASER/ARMY

Tomb Badge Awardee Makes **History**

Army Pfc. Jessica Kwiatkowski made history this last fall when she became the first female infantry Soldier to earn the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Identification Badge. Other women have earned the badge but come from different occupational specialties. Tomb Guards who earn the badge also earn the distinction of being referred to as Sentinels. These Soldiers must complete five testing phases and demonstrate high proficiency in general Army and Tomb Guard knowledge. They also must maintain the meticulous appearance of the uniforms worn by Tomb Guards while on duty, master the various guard changes and ceremonies conducted at the Tomb, and demonstrate verbal and written knowledge of over 12 different poems and 200 Arlington National Cemetery gravesites. In response to the praise she's been given, Kwiatkowski humbly stated to the Defense Department: "I'm honestly just another Tomb Guard."

Source: Department of Defense



Six People **Awarded the Spirit** of Hope Award

Each year, the Department of Defense awards the Spirit of Hope Award to individuals and organizations that epitomize the values and character of comedian and veteran supporter Bob Hope. This year, six individuals and one organization were recognized for contributing time, talent and resources to help service members and their families. The winners and their contributions are as follows:

- Psychologist Walter E. Penk: 60 years of service with the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Senior Master Sgt. Christina S. Schwartztrauber: Outstanding leadership within the Air Force
- Administrative Officer Brenda L. Seubert: 25 years of volunteer service with the military community in Kaiserslautern, Germany
- Trustee Emeritus to the Coast Guard Foundation Roy Vander Putten: Founding the Enlisted Education **Grants and Spouse Education Grants**
- Captain Jergen D. Campbell: Efforts in suicide prevention, morale-building events, resiliency outreach events and speaking engagements within the Marines
- Anthony Allen Teravainen: Devotion to service members and veterans, primarily through his work with STEP, San Diego
- Major Nathaniel J. Lee: Commitment to Gold Star families through his leadership with the Tragedy **Assistance Program for Survivors**

Source: Department of Defense



Small Business Cost Reimbursement for Air Force Spouses

If vou're an Air Force spouse with a small business, funding your company just became easier. The Department of the Air Force has announced that it will reimburse service members up to \$1,000 to re-establish spouse-owned small businesses during a permanent change of station (PCS) or assignment on or after Dec. 23, 2022. Spouses who meet these qualifications must file a claim within 24 months of the date the PCS or PCA orders are authenticated to receive their reimbursement. This new reimbursement can be used in conjunction with the existing \$1,000 reimbursement for spouses who required re-certification or re-licensing, increasing the possible total reimbursement up to \$2,000.

Members are encouraged to contact their installation's Military & Family Readiness Center with questions about eligibility and how to submit a claim. Source: U.S. Space Force



J.S. AIR FORCE/ERIC M. WHITE

Remembering Rosalynn Carter

Former First Lady to President Jimmy Carter and activist Rosalynn Carter passed away this winter at 96. Since before her husband was in office until the day she passed, Rosalynn Carter dedicated her life to public service. Though she supported an array of causes, such as mental health, women's rights and equality, Carter was also a huge advocate for veterans and their caregivers. Outside of The Carter Foundation, she founded the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, which strives to advocate for the service and needs of caregivers throughout the country. In 2022, her organization partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs to create specialized support for veterans and military caregivers. The organizations work together to increase awareness of the needs, programs, services and resources available to veterans and their caregivers and provide them with additional support. Carter's work in mental health additionally correlated directly to veterans' needs as she normalized common veteran diagnoses such as PTSD.

Sources: Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, Wikipedia

The Largest **Veterans** Research **Program Shatters** Records

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that the Million Veteran Program (MVP) welcomed the onemillionth veteran into the program, making it the first research program in the world to include extensive health and genetic data for this many participants. Launched in 2011, MVP allows researchers to understand veteran health challenges better and conduct groundbreaking, life-saving research. The program aims to improve the detection, prevention and treatment of health conditions affecting veterans and, ultimately, all Americans. To date, MVP data has been used in more than 350 peer-reviewed research publications about a wide range of health conditions-including cancer, diabetes, PTSD, suicide prevention, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease and more. "Thanks to the veterans who signed up for this program, VA can better understand—and eventually treat—the health conditions that affect veterans of all eras and backgrounds," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. "This will help us improve health care and ultimately save lives for veterans and non-veterans alike."

Source: VA News

JIANA WALKER/GETTY IMAGES



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Bank of America Donates Millions to Veteran-Owned Businesses

fter distributing millions of Adollars to veteran-owned businesses in the last year, one of the country's leading financial institutions, Bank of America, is looking this year to repeat its process. Announced in late 2023, Bank of America will be seeding a second round of financing for the Veteran Loan Fund, doubling a twovear-old commitment that has already funded more than 500 small businesses built by former military personnel. These companies alone have created or retained more than 3,000 jobs across 37 states. The fund's first \$15 million round, closed in 2022, was deployed in less than 12 months.

"Many veterans have the drive, discipline and leadership skills to fuel small business growth but lack the funding or network to help them grow," Dan Letendre, head of CDFI Lending at Bank of America, stated in an official press release. "We have seen the benefits of low-cost capital in catalyzing entrepreneurship and are pleased to continue to support this work."

The Veteran Loan Fund is a national collaborative of a growing number of Community Development **Financial Institutions** (CDFIs) and specialized veteran service organizations providing responsible capital and technical assistance to underserved veteran entrepreneurs. The fund offers an online platform that connects military veterans and their spouses with mission-focused lenders and education partners to help them build and sustain small businesses. Eligible veterans benefit from below-marketrate funding and free business



The Bank of America branch in San Ramon, California.

coaching.

CDFIs currently enrolled in the program include the Black Business Investment Fund in Florida, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, and Access to Capital for

plans to grow to \$100 million across the nation by 2027, an amount equal to the estimated annual demand for capital from veteran entrepreneurs who lack any funding for their businesses.

"Discipline is perhaps the main asset that veterans bring to business ownership, particularly when it comes to owning a franchise."

-Daniel Nichols

Entrepreneurs in Georgia. The group also works with several technical assistance programs, including Bunker Labs, SCORE, Veteran Business Outreach Centers and Vet to CEO.

The Veteran Loan Fund

Its first \$15 million round, fully deployed in less than 12 months, was made possible by a \$5 million commitment of long-term, below-market rate lending capital from Bank of America as lead investor in

2021, along with support from other major institutions. In this round, Bank of America will provide \$10 million in support of the new \$25 million fund.

Director of Veteran Programs and Operating Manager of the Veteran Loan Fund Grant Bennett stated of the commitment, "Access to responsible capital is a key issue for military veteran entrepreneurs. Now is the time to scale our impact within the veteran business community. We can only do this through the work of our CDFI partners and the support of organizations like Bank of America."

Bank of America is the largest investor in CDFIs, with \$2 billion in financing to more than 260 CDFIs across all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

Source: Bank of America



www.VAMBOA.org

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USAA Offers Estate Planning for Veterans Through Trust & Will



USAA Life Insurance Company, a leading financial services brand for military members and their families, and Trust & Will, a premier digital estate planning and settlement platform, have announced a strategic relationship to provide discounted estate planning and probate services to their members serving their unique needs

"Military service members, veterans and their families face distinctive challenges throughout their financial journey. Their sacrifices for our nation underscore the need for specialized estate planning tools that address their specific circumstances," said Brian Harris, vice president, Transformation and New Business Ventures at USAA. "In uniting with Trust & Will, USAA can now offer

seamless online estate planning solutions alongside our robust suite of financial services. Our members can confidently prepare for the future, knowing their legacy is secure."

USAA members will benefit from Trust & Will's streamlined approach to estate planning. Whether creating a will, setting up a trust or managing an estate, the platform provides efficient, user-friendly tools. Key benefits include:

- Exclusive discounts and benefits for USAA members.
- Priority member support and specialists who understand the unique needs of military families.
- Legally valid documents designed by attorneys.
- A secure, intuitive online platform for both estate plans and probate.
- Swift completion of estate plans.

Dedicated educational resources for military members.

"We're honored to collaborate with an esteemed institution like USAA, who've been helping families for more than a century," shared Cody Barbo, founder and CEO of Trust & Will. "Our shared vision is to empower the brave men and women who serve our country. With this alliance, we're ensuring they have access to comprehensive estate planning resources. It's our way of giving back to those who have given so much."

USAA's commitment to financial wellness is further bolstered with this partnership. The alliance recognizes that while estate planning is crucial, over half of Americans lack a will. USAA and Trust & Will aim to bridge this gap for the military community. USAA

will integrate Trust & Will into essential experiences where a member may need estate planning services, such as acquiring a life insurance policy, updating beneficiaries or settling the estate of a loved one. USAA saw value in Trust & Will even before this relationship by investing in the company through USAA's Corporate Development team in early 2023.

"As champions for the military community, USAA sees this collaboration as a pivotal step in bolstering our members' financial resilience," continued Harris. "By aligning with Trust & Will, we're amplifying our commitment to guiding our members toward a secure, prosperous future and building on the value of their USAA membership."

Source: USAA



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BMX Racing for a Cause

ith devices and computers completely consuming people's lives, especially our youth, it's refreshing to see this group of fathers and their kids out competing, practicing, traveling and fellowshipping, all while representing a cause. To top it off, these are veteran dads and their kids! Navy vet Doug Harwell started the ASN BMX team a few years ago with his then-three-year-old son Tucker. The team results from a passion, a prayer and a vision. Today, it has grown to multiple states, teams and families! Let's get to know him and this incredible success story.

Annie Nelson (AN): When did you serve, and how did you pick the Navy?

Doug Harwell (DH): I went to the Navy recruiting station first and made my mind up then that [it] was the branch I wanted to serve in. I joined in June 1992 and was honorably discharged in March 2001. I served on the USS Ingraham FFG-61, COMPATWING 10 in Whidbey Island, and the USS David R Ray DD 971.

AN: What did you do when you first transitioned out of the military?

DH: I worked at Lowes Home Improvement as an assistant department manager and as a DJ at McCabe's Country Bar in Everett and Tacoma, Washington.

AN: How did you decide to go into BMX?

DH: At three years old, my son rode his bike for the first time without training wheels. My brother-in-law mentioned that his son was doing BMX and we should see if there was a track local to us here in Austin. We found one, Central Texas BMX (now called Capitol City BMX), literally 10 minutes from us. We took Tucker there for the first time when he was three, and he instantly fell in love with it. After six months of running around the track with him, I decided to get a BMX bike and start racing with him. So, he really was the one that got me started in BMX.

AN: What made you decide to organize your own BMX team, and how did you choose to race for a cause?

DH: Annie, you have always been a good friend of mine, and I knew that you started



Team captain Doug Harwell with his son and co-captain, Tucker.

American Soldier Network. When my family lived in California, I would help with the charity at the local country bars to help raise money. When my son and I started the team, it was a no-brainer, really. I asked if Tucker and I could represent American Soldier Network on the BMX track to help get the name seen all over since we would be racing all over the state of Texas, but also in other states too

At first, I never imagined the team would be as big as it is today. It started when a father and son, who were going to our track, asked me, "How can we be a part of this, the team?" The father was in the Army, stationed at Fort Hood. Texas. From there. the team grew. We now have almost 50 riders (consisting of veterans, active-duty military, retired military and first responders and their families). The team is located in Texas, Michigan, Colorado, Georgia and Utah.

AN: Is running the team anything like the camaraderie of the military?

DH: Absolutely. The pledge we have all the riders sign basically says that we set the example for everyone else. We strive for good sportsmanship, helping others and helping our local tracks. We don't just



(L-R) Chris White, Annie Nelson and Doug Harwell.



The Texas team.



The Colorado team.

consider ourselves a team but a family! We really help each other out and encourage all of the riders when they're racing. Everyone really looks out for each other.

AN: How do you think participating in a program like this helps veterans?

DH: I have personally met other BMX riders who do this sport because it helps with their PTS. It's a way to help them stay active and gives them something to strive for. I have had people on the team, before they joined, say that they saw the camaraderie in our team, which is what they missed from the military because, to be honest, I really don't think you can find that camaraderie anywhere else.

AN: How many dads and their kids do you have on the team?

DH: Most of the team is made up of kids, but there are a few dads who race with their kids

AN: Do you have any mothers racing?

DH: Yes! Not many, but it's great when the whole family is racing. There are really not a lot of girls in this sport, especially moms. So, it's great to see them out there racing with their kids

AN: How can folks start their own ASN BMX program?

DH: So, if anyone wants to start an ASN BMX team in their state, they really have to go through me. The first thing I always ask is for that person to go to the American Soldier Network website and decide if they would even be interested in representing the charity. Then, as time goes on, I establish a relationship with that person. My biggest thing is that I cannot have any negativity involving ASN, which makes it hard when teams are starting in other states.

Once I know the character of that person and develop trust, then that person becomes my team lead in that state. Every new rider/ family that wants to come on is vetted. Like I said, every rider must go to the ASN website to see if they want to represent this great charity. I will usually speak with the new family/rider and ask them why they want to be a part of this team. Most of the time, they believe in the charity and see how the team seems to be more of a family at racing events. They are all sitting together, helping each other out and encouraging each rider.

For more information about American Soldier Network, visit americansoldiernetwork.org.

\$9 Billion in Debt Has Been Forgiven, **What Does That Mean for Vets?**

President Biden announced that an additional 125,000 Americans have been approved for \$9 billion in debt relief through fixes the U.S. Department of Education has made to income-driven repayment (IDR) and Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), granting automatic relief for borrowers with total and permanent disabilities. The latest announcement brought the

This announcement does not impact GI Bill benefits. However, for many veterans, service members and their families, this new plan may mean relief from the burden of student loans.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)

If a government or nonprofit organization employs you, you might be eligible for the PSLF

tax liability for you, but your state may tax you. For more information, check with the IRS or a tax advisor.

Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) Plan

Most federal student loans are eligible for at least one income-driven repayment plan. If your federal student loan payments are high relative to your income, you may want

option that best meets their needs and goals. You can also use it to decide whether to consolidate your student loans.

Total and Permanent Disability Discharge (TPD)

If you're 100% disabled, you may qualify for a discharge of your federal student loans and/or Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant service obligation.

Veterans with one or more service-connected disabilities totaling 100% or who are totally disabled based on an individual unemployability rating may qualify. Individuals can also qualify if receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). You must also provide additional documentation to the Department of Education regarding your disability

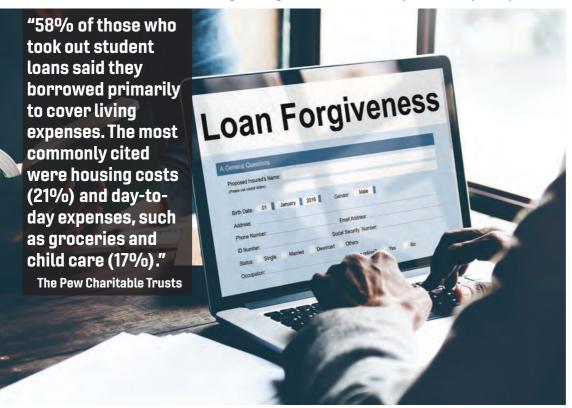
The amount of your loan forgiven due to TPD discharge may be considered income for state tax purposes. Consult with your state tax office or a tax professional before filing vour tax return.

Loans discharged between Jan. 1, 2018, and Dec. 25, 2025, will not be taxed as federal income. Borrowers can learn more about TPD online.

Resources for active-duty members

If you are currently serving, there are specific resources and information that you should know. Payments made on student loans while on active-duty service may qualify for PSLF. Also, any interest on student loans obtained prior to your military service is capped at 6% during periods of active dutv.

Source: VA News



full approved debt cancellation by the administration to \$127 billion for nearly 3.6 million Americans.

The pause on student loan payments and 0% interest ended on Sept. 1, 2023, and payments restarted in October. Through the latest updates to the administration of student loan repayments and previous provisions, many borrowers may be eligible for one or more forms of student loan debt relief.

Program. The PSLF Program forgives the remaining balance on your direct loans after you've made the equivalent of 120 qualifying monthly payments under an accepted repayment plan while working full-time for an eligible emplover.

According to the IRS, student loan amounts forgiven under PSLF are not taxable income. Any debt forgiven due to PSLF won't create a federal

to repay your loans under an income-driven repayment plan.

Earlier this year, the SAVE plan was launched. If eligible, this plan makes borrowers' monthly payments as low as \$0 and prevents balances from growing because of unpaid interest.

Using the Department of Education's Loan Simulator, borrowers can calculate student loan payments and choose a loan repayment

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No. 2 worldwide and in North America in research contributions 2018-2022, The UTD Top 100 Business School Research Rankings ™ (2023)

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Do Veterans' Educational Benefits Expire?

By Quennette McCoy

The Servicemembers' Re-■ adjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill, was signed into law on June 22, 1944, by President Franklin Roosevelt as a means to assist returning service members with reintegrating into society through academic achievement. Without such an entitlement, many returning from World War II may have been unemployed for extended periods, as they could not gain the knowledge, skills and abilities of their counterparts who worked

Small acts such as providing accurate and consistent education benefits counseling can make an institution well-known for being military friendly and improve veteran student satisfaction.

continuously throughout the conflict. In the years since then, this bill has been updated several times and has now settled into the most recent version of the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, also known as the Forever GI Bill. While most believe that educational benefits never expire, there are exceptions. Here, we will discuss how universities and colleges can assist their student veterans in making the most of their educational benefits.

Why would a timeline be placed on how long a veteran has to utilize the benefit? Providing an expiration date encourages individuals to promptly embark upon their academic journey, or vocational career opportunities, instead of procrastinating. Gaining new skills, degrees or certifications allows a smoother transition into their post-military lives, as these credentials are attractive to potential employers. Additionally, this hard suspense supports the program's fiscal sustainability, which is funded by taxpayers, by allowing budget analysts to forecast potential expenditures in future year budgets.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs advises that those discharged prior to Jan. 1, 2013, have 15 years from the date of discharge to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and those entitled to the Montgomery GI Bill have 10 years from the date of separation. The suspense given for the Montgomery GI Bill could mean that the benefit has already lapsed for some of your students. So, what can you do to help?

First, the financial aid office should verify the type of educational benefits to which the student is entitled. They should then be referred to the university's military student affairs office, as those individuals are well suited to advise the students on achieving their academic goals by maximizing their benefits. While separating service members receive a briefing on their VA education benefits prior to departing the military, some do not pay attention to the content. The quality of the information provided in the briefing varies from



presenter to presenter, so one group may be given thorough instruction while another may receive a high-level overview. Additionally, service members receive a slew of mandatory briefings before exiting the service and may suffer from data overload, resulting in little information retention. One misconception surrounding educational benefits is that students must maintain an uninterrupted enrollment. Individuals can access their GI Bill. take time off, and then return to their studies.

There are specific circumstances whereby veterans can request extensions for their educational benefits if the individual: subsequently served 90 or more consecutive days on active duty following the initial filing for benefits, had an injury or illness that prevented them from attending an academic/ vocational institution, or was held by a foreign government. The first condition is relatively common among National Guard and Army Reserve students, as some frequently accept activeduty mobilizations. Ensure that the veteran provides all discharge documents for evaluation when evaluating their qualifications for benefits. The education officer can assist the

student by helping to compose the content of the submission, leading to an increased chance of acceptance by the VA.

Studies show that approximately 30% of veterans never utilize their educational benefits. So, when individuals make an effort to use their GI Bill, it is imperative that schools assist them to the maximum extent. While the expiration of educational benefits will someday become a moot issue due to the Forever GI Bill, colleges, universities and vocational training institutions must be wellversed in assisting their veteran populations in traversing this funding labyrinth. Many veterans need to become more familiar with the full extent of their entitlements, and institutions of higher learning should be equipped to advise them appropriately. Small acts such as providing accurate and consistent education benefits counseling can make an institution well-known for being military friendly and improve veteran student satisfaction. In gaining such a reputation, a school can experience increased veteran enrollment and receive the disbursement of those educational benefits on which they advised.

This article was originally published with HigherED Military.



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Cole Hauser Serving the Military

By Brady Rhoades

Tow would Montana cowboy Rip Wheeler of Paramount Plus' smash hit Yellowstone fare in the military?

U.S. Veterans Magazine asked actor Cole Hauser, who plays Rip, the question.

"He definitely wouldn't be an officer," Hauser said. "Not a water guy, but anything with land and resources he'd be on."

What Hauser is on is supporting military families.

A strong believer in second chances, he devotes much of his time to the Special **Operations Warrior Foundation, which** offers educational scholarships to the children of fallen special operations personnel as well as Medal of Honor recipients.

He chose the organization because of its legitimacy, he said. Generals, many of whom have seen action, are on the board of directors.

Hauser described them as, "Guys who are looking out for their own. These are guys who served. The money is going in the right pockets.'

The charity, based in Tampa, Florida, started in the aftermath of the failed attempt to rescue 52 American hostages in Iran on April 24, 1980. The foundation's president, Clay Hutmacher, has stated that the organization made a "battlefield promise" to care for the 17 children left behind by the eight Americans killed. The foundation was formed via the Col. Arthur D. "Bull" Simons Scholarship Fund, named

in honor of the legendary Army Green Beret, Bull Simons, who repeatedly risked his life on rescue missions.

Since its inception, the Special **Operations Warrior Foundation has** awarded 1,100 scholarships.

Hauser has also served on USO tours in Afghanistan and visited wounded warriors at Walter Reed Medical Center.

"I want them to know they have a second chance," Hauser said. "There were about four or five guys that I stayed in touch with for many, many years, some of whom, unfortunately, committed suicide. Some are still alive and doing well."

The number of suicides across the active-duty military increased from 75 in the first quarter of 2022 to 94 in the first quarter of 2023, according to the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. In 2022, 492 service members died by suicide.

Many service members experience depression, anxiety, PTSD and other maladies during or after their service. Isolation and a feeling of hopelessness make these conditions worse. Hauser, as part of a national effort, works to keep that from happening.

His Rip-like straightforwardness and dry humor can bridge the gap between civilians and Soldiers. During one visit, he walked into a room at Walter Reed and told a wounded warrior, "God, you look like a rat's (expletive).

"It got him to smile," Hauser said.

FEATURE: COVER STORY

Yellowstone, a Western drama centering on the Dutton family and their ranch in Montana, which developers and politicians are eyeing for profit, is arguably the biggest hit of that genre since Bonanza in the 1960s.

Rip is one of the most compelling characters on the show. He's a thoughtful, sweet husband to Beth (Kelly Reilly) and a loyal employee to John Dutton III (Kevin Costner). He's also ruthless. Threaten Dutton or the ranch, and you'll likely find yourself slain and thrown in the infamous train station, a lawless ravine on the border of Montana and Wyoming.

Rip is the prototypical cowboy, a man of few words and plenty of action.

Here are four of his most memorable and oft-quoted lines:

- -"There's sharks and minnows in this world...and if you don't know which one you are, you ain't a shark."
- —"I'd rather kill a thousand men than shoot another horse."
- -"There's a man in there somewhere. Sometimes, it just takes another man to find
- —"You know, when you boil life down, it's funny just how little you need, isn't it?" Yellowstone, which first ran in 2018, will air its finale in November 2024.

Before Yellowstone, Hauser starred in Higher Learning, School Ties, Dazed and Confused, Good Will Hunting, Hart's War, 2 Fast 2 Furious, Tigerland and other films. He was nominated for the Independent Spirit Award for Best Supporting Male for his performance in Tigerland.

He also starred as Officer Randy Willitz in the police crime drama High Incident and as Ethan Kelly in the police drama Rogue.

Hauser, 48, grew up in California, Oregon and Florida, the son of Cass Warner, who founded the film production company Warner Sisters, and actor Wings Hauser.

Art and entertainment were in his blood. His paternal grandfather was Academy Award-winning screenwriter Dwight Hauser, and his great-grandfather Harry Warner was a founding partner of Warner Bros.

Hauser, a somewhat disinterested student but a good athlete, dropped out of high school at 16 to pursue acting. He broke into the big time in 1992 with a performance in School Ties.

But he was always tethered to the military; it goes back to his maternal grandfather, Milton Sperling, a Marine at Iwo Jima during WWII and, later, a Hollywood producer and screenwriter. Sperling gave Hauser a ring bearing the Marine Corps emblem. The Corps











- 1: On a USO tour in 2014, Cole Hauser enjoys time with more than 1,900 troops stationed at locations including Bagram Air Base, Camp Leatherneck and Camp Bastion.
- 2: On his first USO tour, Cole Hauser visits with a medevac unit in the Middle East during the Fourth of July holiday.
- 3: Cole Hauser supporting our troops deployed in the Middle East.
- 4: Cole Hauser arrives with his father, actor Wings Hauser, mother, producer Cass Warner and wife Cynthia Daniel to Universal Pictures' world premiere of *The Break-Up* at the Mann Village Theatre on May 22, 2006 in Westwood, California.
- 5: Kevin Costner as John Dutton and Cole Hauser as Rip Wheeler in the Yellowstone episode "Resurrection Day."



FEATURE: COVER STORY

was formed in 1775, and the principles practiced by the pioneers back then are practiced by Marines today. The emblem features an eagle, a globe and an anchor. The motto of the Marines is Semper Fidelis, Latin for "always faithful."

Sperling knew all about life as a Marine. He never stopped being one.

"When he was dying, it's one of the things he talked to me about. That was the initial seed planted in my life," Hauser said.

In late 2023, Hauser, with many wondering what he'd do as Yellowstone wound down, launched his Free Rein Coffee Company (freereincoffee.com).

Free Rein offers six blends, all created in San Angelo, Texas.

Heavy Spur is for sippers looking for a load of caffeine. Others feature flavors such as cavenne and cinnamon.

Hauser's favorite?

American Dirt, a dark, 100% Arabic wonder.

"If you like strong coffee, mine is free dirt," he said.

Why venture into coffee?

Because it's a staple of the rugged American West.

"We want to inspire the go-getters, the dreamers and the believers to fuel their pursuits," he said. "Just as the American Dream knows no boundaries, we aim to exceed expectations and create a legacy of our own."

The Armed Forces employs about 1.4 million. Go-getters in the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force and National Guard serve their country. They're stateside at places like Fort Sill, Naval Air Station Lemoore and Marine Corps Base Quantico. They're abroad, providing security assistance to Ukraine, and supporting Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria, among other work.

Some come home injured, physically and mentally. That's where other veterans come in; organizations such as the Warrior Foundation engage, and civilians try to do their part.

Some of the troops return to their hometowns in an unthinkable way for their loved ones, having given, as Lincoln said, the "last full measure of devotion." They're mourned, but their families feel the fallout for the rest of their lives.

That's why the Special Operations Warrior Foundation chose the business of hope.

As a soldier in the foundation, Hauser did. too.

"I feel a need as an American to serve the military," he said.

















1: Cole Hauser enjoying a cup of his Free Rein Coffee.

nount

- 2: Cole Hauser and wife Cynthia Daniel attend the premiere of Warner Bros. Pictures and Alcon Entertainment's Transcendence at the Regency Village Theatre on April 10, 2014 in Westwood, California.
- 3: Actors Cole Hauser and Richard Schiff attend the party celebrating Rogue at the London Hotel on March 16, 2016 in Los Angeles.
- 4: Cole Hauser, Cynthia Daniel and two of their children, Steely Rose and Colt, attend Paramount's Yellowstone Season 5 New York Premiere at Walter Reade Theater on Nov. 3, 2022 in New York City.
- 5: Cole Hauser and Red Bull Racing Team Principal Christian Horner shake hands on the grid during the F1 Grand Prix of United States at Circuit of The Americas on Oct. 22, 2023 in Austin, Texas.

- 6: Cole Hauser is a champion of the special operations community.
- 7: Derek Luke and Cole Hauser attend AOL Build Presents: Actors Derek Luke and Cole Hauser at AOL Studios in New York on June 24, 2015 in New York City.
- 8: Actor Cole Hauser and actress Gabrielle Union present the award for "Best Work in a Vehicle" during the 3rd Annual Taurus World Stunt Awards at Paramount Studios June 1, 2003 in Hollywood,
- **9:** Cole Hauser and Luke Wilson attend the 44th Annual Los Angeles Police Memorial Foundation Celebrity Golf Tournament at Ron Burkle's Estate on May 21, 2016 in Los Angeles.



Lessons in Love from Military Couples

mong military couples, Athere is often a mutual commitment to serve. Despite the shared purpose and dedication, the nature of military service can contribute to feelings of loneliness. Marked by deployments, transitions, frequent relocations and extended periods of separation, the unique circumstances associated with military life can intensify feelings of isolation for both partners. But as with all couples, it takes time, effort and attention to foster connection and sustain a

Small moments of shared meaning can improve relationship satisfaction. Create rituals, something you do regularly to deepen connection and intimacy.

healthy relationship.

Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), a national not-for-profit network of 24 mental health clinics for post-9/11 veterans, service members and their families, offers lessons in love from military spouses and tips to help couples enhance their connectedness:

Army spouse Nichole stresses the importance of listening, "When emotions are high, we have learned how vital it is to listen to hear instead of listening to respond. Which sometimes means taking a time out before reengaging in a conversation."

Tip: Try Reflective Listening

- Improve communication by deliberately listening to your partner and reflecting back to them what they just said as a means to truly understand their position. Ex. "What I hear you saying is..."

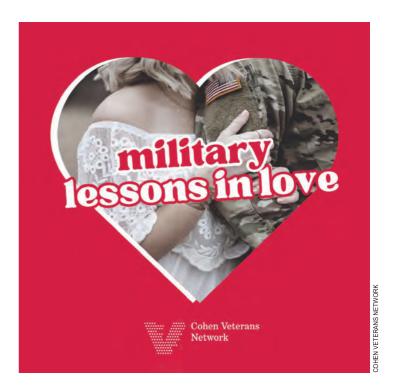
Air Force veteran and Army spouse Kametra emphasizes the importance of communication, "I would rather over-communicate with my husband than undercommunicate. No matter how I feel, I express it to him so he knows and can better support me."

Tip: Communicate Your Needs – Speak about your emotion using "I" statements, identify the problem, then propose a solution. Ex. "I feel frustrated when I walk the dog and you're asleep. Will you walk the dog some days?"

Coast Guard spouse Jennifer says new experiences help her and her husband stay connected, "We've learned through our military journey together the importance of building new memories. Couples that play together stay together! It's never too late to try something new and exciting."

Tip: Prioritize Having Fun
Together - We often get caught
up in daily responsibilities.
Make an intentional effort
to consistently engage in fun
activities with your partner to
maintain connection, such as
movie nights, walks or lunch
dates.

Navy veteran and spouse Korrissa offers insight on how she and her husband



spend time together during deployments, "We create Tuesdates. Every Tuesday night, we block off two hours to have a virtual date night. At the beginning of the week, we decide on a dinner to cook together, and on Tuesday night, we cook and eat together via Facetime. It's a great way to make intentional time for one another."

Tip: Establish Rituals

- Small moments of shared meaning can improve relationship satisfaction. Create rituals, something you do regularly to deepen connection and intimacy. For example, in the morning, make coffee for your partner or, during separations, send them a quick text or email.

Military spouse Hanna has learned how to make up for missed occasions, "When we celebrated our 10-year anniversary, we marked the occasion by getting professional photos taken of us. Sometimes, military families miss out on celebrating special occasions and holidays together, so I make it a point to celebrate everything big or small, from anniversaries and birthdays to getting an award in school. Celebrations make everything more meaningful and memorable for us as a couple and family."

Tip: Make Your Love
Obvious – We never want
to assume that our partner
knows how much we love and
appreciate them – so, make
it obvious. How? Show them
by celebrating anniversaries,
birthdays, etc. Making the extra
effort to do something special
for the other person can show
you care.

For more information, visit cohenveteransnetwork.org/couples.

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Project Dynamo Saves Lives & Reunites Families

By Kellie Speed

Then the United States withdrew from Afghanistan in the most unprecedented way in August 2021, Bryan Stern knew he had to jump into action to rescue the American citizens and allies left behind.

"At the time, I was working on a speech for the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and was watching on TV," he said. "It was clear we were going to leave people behind, and it was mismanaged for a lot of reasons. I had been there a lot and buried a lot of my friends in Afghanistan over time, so I wanted to figure out what to do. It was emotional working on the 9/11 speech, and this period of time was extremely personal."

At that moment, Stern decided to create the international rescue organization Project Dynamo, an elite veteran-led and donor-funded nonprofit designed to assist Americans and allies in peril. Since then, their rescue missions have spanned nationally from Hurricane Ian in Florida and the wildfires of Maui to internationally—Sudan, Ukraine, Russia, and most recently, Israel in the aftermath of the Hamas attack.

Stern, the founder and CEO of the nonprofit, is a multiple-



Bryan Stern on Project Dynamo.

tour combat veteran who served the United States in both the Army and Navy. The reallife Liam Neeson got his start in infantry and then "found his way to intelligence and special operations."

Incredibly, Stern and his team were able to return 117 Americans to their families from Afghanistan, "the largest rescue in history." Since then, they have done nearly 600 land and air operations, rescuing nearly 6,500 people.

The specialist in nationallevel intelligence and special operations was a military first responder during the attacks of 9/11. With more than 25 years of experience specializing in hostage rescue, counter-terrorism and unconventional warfare, the Purple Heart recipient has supported operations in nearly 70 countries.

"9/11 is woven into our fabric and everything we do," Stern said. "Americans need help, and we are the Americans who just show up. We are Americans doing what Americans have always done-[we] help each other out. In the history of the

U.S., we have never left Americans behind enemy lines."

Stern has served with the most elite units and agencies within the U.S. Special Operations and Intelligence communities and is a specialist in near-peer threats, hard targets and denied area/contested area operations.

Will his work ever be complete?

"This is what retirement looks like," he joked. "I pray for that day when we won't be needed. Project Dynamo was only supposed to be around for three weeks. It is stressful, but we have been able to reunite families with their kids. We have heard bombs going off or shooting in the background with someone begging for help. It's very hard work. There are language barriers, and we have gone three to four days with no sleep, not a wink. Everyone has PTSD. Marriages are strained, and finances are strained. At the end of the day, I am just a servant of the people. My oath is still ingrained in me. If the government is not going to rescue Americans, I am."

To learn more about Project Dynamo or to donate, visit projectdynamo.org.





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WWII Veterans Are Now Eligible for Free VA Health Care

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is one of the most popular resources used by military personnel and veterans and the most extensive integrated health care system in the country, with 1,321 health care facilities, including several medical centers and outpatient sites. This system now offers free services to all World War II service members.

On Nov. 10, 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that all World War II veterans are eligible for VA health care, medical services and nursing home care at no cost. This expansion applies to all WWII veterans who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946, regardless of their length of service or financial status. These veterans will not

nation—and the world—needed them most. Now, it's our job to serve them in every way that we can," said VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "We are proud to provide world-class, no-cost health care to these heroes at VA, and we encourage all of them to enroll today."

While these services will be provided free of charge, it's important to note that the VA cannot automatically enroll veterans into the health care plan. Veterans must apply for health care benefits through their local VA office, online or by phone at 1-800-698-2411 if they aren't currently enrolled.

Veterans who enroll may also keep their private providers, Medicare and most other insurance to meet their health care needs.

"These members of the Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our nation—and the world—needed them most. Now, it's our job to serve them in every way that we can."

>>>>>>>>>>>>

-VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

have to pay copays, enrollment fees or monthly premiums.

Additionally, veterans who previously did not qualify or were not approved for VA health care are encouraged to re-apply as income levels no longer apply due to this expansion.

"These members of the Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our This expansion is made possible through the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022 (Cleland-Dole Act), which was signed in December 2022.

Facilities that WWII veterans can gain access to at no cost also include the following:



Medical Centers

VHA Medical Centers provide a wide range of services, including traditional hospital-based services such as surgery, critical care, mental health, orthopedics, pharmacy, radiology and physical therapy.

In addition, most medical centers offer additional medical and surgical specialty services, including audiology and speech pathology, dermatology, dental, geriatrics, neurology, oncology, podiatry, prosthetics, urology and vision care. Some medical centers also offer advanced services such as organ transplants and plastic surgery.

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

To make health care more accessible, VHA utilizes Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) across the country. These clinics provide the most common outpatient services, including health and wellness visits, without the hassle of visiting a larger medical center. VHA continues to expand the network of

CBOCs to include more rural locations, putting access to care closer to home.

Community Living Centers

Community Living Centers (CLC) are skilled nursing facilities, often referred to as nursing homes. Veterans with chronic stable conditions such as dementia, those requiring rehabilitation or those who need comfort and care at the end of life are served within one of our CLCs.

Patient Advocates

Available at every medical center, patient advocates are highly trained professionals who can help resolve your concerns about any aspect of your health care experience, particularly those that cannot be resolved at the point of care. Patient advocates listen to any questions, problems or special needs you have and refer your concerns to the appropriate medical center staff for resolution.

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs



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EMDR, The Proven Trauma Therapy with the Power to Heal

By Deborah L. Korn, PsyD

 \mathbf{E} ye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy, EMDR therapy for short, is a memoryfocused psychotherapy that can help veterans and their families deal with the impact and legacy of trauma and adverse experiences in their lives. Over three decades ago, Francine Shapiro, the developer of EMDR therapy, discovered that purposely moving your eyes horizontally back and forth while focusing on a traumatic memory leads to a reduction in the vividness and intensity of that memory. She developed a protocol incorporating these eye movements, with the goal of treating PTSD and other trauma-related problems. Shapiro studied its application with combat veterans and rape survivors, publishing the first research study in support of EMDR's effectiveness in 1989.

Over time, it became clear that EMDR was much more than a "desensitization" technique for reducing the fear and anxiety associated with traumatic memories; it also facilitated the "reprocessing" of thoughts, beliefs and feelings, leading to a significant



circumstances; I'm worthy and deserve to have a good life." Those living with a sense of dread and powerlessness often experience a shift from, "I'm in danger" and "I have no control" to "I'm safe enough" and "I have choices and can take care of myself now."

their fingers or track a light moving horizontally back and forth while focusing on a traumatic memory. Or they may play alternating tones through headphones or tap back and forth on their patients' hands.

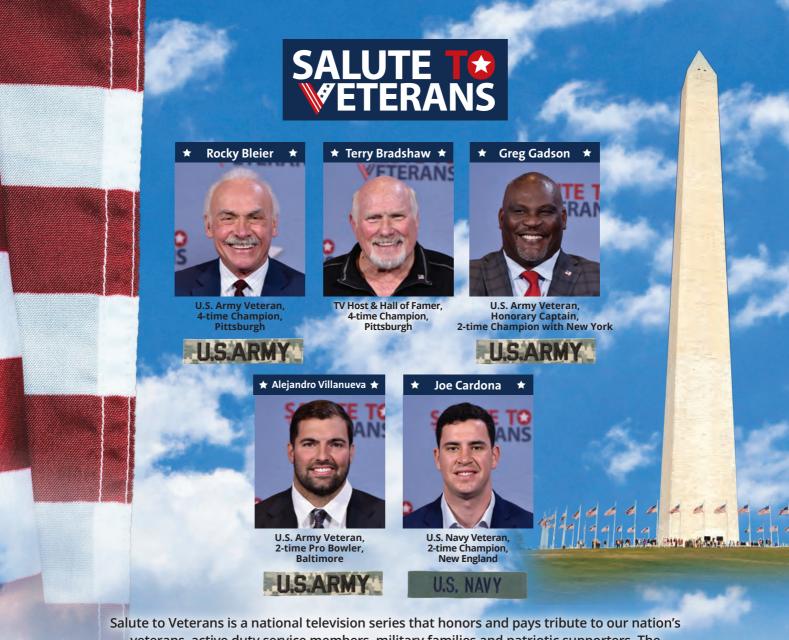
The theory behind EMDR is that psychological problems

Research involving veterans demonstrates the effectiveness of EMDR in reducing PTSD symptoms as well as a wide range of other clinical symptoms beyond PTSD, including depression, anxiety, anger, chronic pain and addiction.

transformation of one's sense of self. Over the course of EMDR therapy, beliefs like, "It's my fault; I'm ashamed and don't deserve to live," shift to "I did the best I could under the Other forms of back-andforth "bilateral" stimulation can also help patients desensitize and reprocess their traumatic memories. EMDR therapists might have patients follow

come from a failure to adequately process traumatic memories. Unprocessed traumatic memories, frozen or locked in our nervous system, continue to affect how we perceive things, decisions we make, reactions we have and the beliefs we hold about ourselves and others. Present day triggers—situations that somehow remind us, consciously or unconsciously, of traumatic events from earlier in our lives—activate these unprocessed memories. This leads to destabilizing symptoms like nightmares, flashbacks, phobias, negative thinking and extreme episodes of anger, grief, shame and guilt.

In EMDR therapy, a "target" trauma-related memory is identified, and the therapist activates it with a set of focused questions. The brain's information processing system is then jump started with 30-60 second sets of bilateral stimulation. EMDR stresses the importance of "dual attention," that is, keeping one foot in



Salute to Veterans is a national television series that honors and pays tribute to our nation's veterans, active duty service members, military families and patriotic supporters. The inspirational and educational program offers insightful discussion, resources and solutions for the ongoing issues our veterans face daily. The series shares the stories of distinguished veterans who have served their country, overcame personal challenges in their lives and made a difference in their communities, while inspiring others to do the same.



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the present at all times while accessing the past. We remind our patients that what they are remembering is "old stuff" and ask them to "observe from a distance." After each set of bilateral stimuli, the patient is asked to simply notice what (if any) changes occurred and to report any images, thoughts, feelings, sensations, impulses or insights observed.

In the course of reprocessing, patients sometimes spontaneously imagine saying or doing what they were not able to say or do in the past. They may express rage, imagine fighting back with superhuman strength, or find themselves saying "goodbye" or "I'm sorry" to someone they've lost. Patients may see a younger version of themselves in their mind's eye, giving them the opportunity to offer compassion or understanding to their vounger self, instinctively knowing what is needed for movement toward healing and self-forgiveness.

With reprocessing, the distress eventually decreases, the past is finally moved into



There have been more than

reducing PTSD symptoms as well as a wide range of other clinical symptoms beyond PTSD, including depression, anxiety, anger, chronic pain and addiction. There have been hopeful reports of effective treatment for combat-related medically unexplained

By the end of treatment, patients often say that they feel less haunted by the past and more mobilized in caring for themselves, connecting with others and working toward future change.

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the past, and patients are able to see and experience their present reality with greater clarity and perspective. There are shifts in thoughts, feelings, behaviors and physical sensations. Healing involves spontaneous movement toward more positive thinking, more manageable feelings, and a dramatic reduction in the level of disturbance experienced in one's body.

Research involving veterans demonstrates the effectiveness of EMDR in

symptoms (MUS), phantom limb pain, tinnitus, headaches, insomnia, moral injury and complicated bereavement. There is also support for the treatment of acute stress reactions in active-duty military personnel and for intensive, short-term (e.g., 10 days), consecutive-day treatment of veterans with full-blown PTSD, EMDR is also being used to treat both victims and first responders in group settings in the immediate aftermath of tragedies.

30 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) demonstrating the effectiveness of EMDR for the treatment of PTSD in adults. EMDR is considered an evidence-based, top-tier treatment for this condition. In a study published by Carlson et al. (1998) in the Journal of Traumatic Stress, 78% of treated veterans no longer met the full criteria for PTSD after only 12 sessions of EMDR. The National Center for PTSD, part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, has stated that, "[EMDR]...is one of the most studied treatments for PTSD. A large number of studies demonstrate it is effective to treat PTSD when administered over approximately three months. EMDR has the strongest recommendation for being an effective treatment in most clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of PTSD." A 2019 study published by Mavranezouli et al. in PLOS One reported that EMDR was not only clinically effective but also the most cost-effective of the 11 trauma therapies evaluated in the treatment of adults with PTSD.

EMDR doesn't require that

patients provide detailed descriptions of events, engage in prolonged exposure to traumatic memories or complete homework between sessions. In a full course of treatment, the therapist and patient, together, address past traumatic experiences, current triggering situations and behavioral goals for the future. By the end of treatment, patients often say that they feel less haunted by the past and more mobilized in caring for themselves, connecting with others and working toward future change.

For veterans and their families interested in learning more about EMDR therapy, here are some resources:

- The EMDR International Association (EMDRIA)
- The National Center for PTSD
- MakeTheConnection.org

Deborah Korn, PsyD, is an internationally renowned pioneer and expert in EMDR therapy. She is on the faculties of the EMDR Institute in California and the Trauma Research Foundation in Boston and is a respected member of the EMDR International Association. Dr. Korn is the co-author of Every Memory Deserves Respect: EMDR, The Proven Trauma Therapy with the Power to Heal with Michael Baldwin.



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Meet the New Air Force Chief of Staff: General David W. Allvin

By Natalie Rodgers

The U.S. Senate has confirmed decorated commander, pilot and ■ the highest-ranking officer in the Air Force, General David W. Allvin, as the 23rd Air Force Chief of Staff. He was confirmed with a nearly unanimous vote of 95 to 1 and sworn in the same day.

"It is truly an honor to be confirmed as the 23rd Chief of Staff of the Air Force," Allvin said. "My wife, Gina, and I are humbled by this opportunity, and we are eager to continue to serve our Air Force, our Airmen and their families."

General Allvin has been in service with the U.S. Air Force since the beginning of his career. He graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1986 as a second lieutenant with a Bachelor of Science in Astronautical Engineering. He later earned his Master of Science in Management from Troy State University while serving his country. Allvin went on to command at the squadron and wing levels, including with the 97th Air Mobility Wing at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma, which focuses on educating and training Air Force pilots.

From his graduation in 1986 to his service in Afghanistan, Allvin quickly climbed the ranks from second lieutenant to brigadier



Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall swears in Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David W. Allvin as the Air Force's 23rd Chief of Staff at Falcon Stadium, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.





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Mark your calendar: August 5-9, 2024 WIFLE Foundation Annual Leadership Training

Details: WIFLEFoundation.org Registration opens February 2024 general. During this time and beyond, Allvin has held numerous high-ranking titles as a commander and director and even served on the Ioint Staff.

For the last 37 years of service to the Air Force, Allvin has served in the following capacities:

- Commanding General, NATO Air Training Command in Afghanistan
- Commander, 438th Air Expeditionary Wing in Kabul, Afghanistan
- Commander, 618th Air and Space Operations Center
- Director, Strategy, Concepts and Assessments at the U.S. Air Force Headquarters
- Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Requirements at the U.S. Air Force Headquarters
- Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy at the U.S. Air Force Headquarters U.S. European Command
- Vice Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy with the Joint Staff
- Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy, J-5 with the Joint Staff
- Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Air Force

His time serving in these roles earned him higher-ranking general statuses, becoming a major general in 2013, lieutenant general in 2019 and general in 2020. His four-star general status was achieved in conjunction with his nomination as Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Air Force, which he served as for three years before becoming the Chief of Staff.

As a pilot, Allvin has accumulated more than 4,600 hours of flight time in over 30 aircraft, including 800 flight test hours and 100 hours in combat. He is also partially responsible for establishing the joint force operating concepts, helping write the Joint All-Domain Command and Control precursors, and playing an active role in the military recruiting and retention strategies.

Allvin became Chief of Staff at the end of General CQ Brown Jr.'s



Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force General David W. Allvin.

tenure when Brown became the nation's highest-ranking military officer. General Brown now serves as the 21st Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the principal military advisor to the President, Secretary of Defense and National Security Council. According to the Air and Space Forces Association, Brown said of Allvin coming into the role:

"Gen. Dave Allvin is the right leader for this defining decade as our Air Force continues to adapt to the evolving

global security environment and ensure we have the culture, concepts and capabilities needed to compete and win in a highlycontested environment. His expertise in strategy and planning will be crucial to the service's success in this era of sustained strength and deterrence."

After his confirmation, Allvin stated his intentions for the role, placing a focus on national security and allyship:

"Our nation is coming to grips with the rapid pace of change that is upon us, and with those intending to act out against our national interests while aggressively seeking the means to do so. America's national security focus is crucial as we navigate this new global landscape with our allies and partners, especially as opportunities for distraction and confusion are increasingly exploited."

Sources: U.S. Air Force, Air and Space Forces Association, Wikipedia



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We Came in Peace

Legacy of triumph and tragedy continues for Beirut veterans

DAV (Disabled American Veterans) —

Forty years ago, on October 23, 1983, a suicide truck bomber attacked the Battalion Landing Team headquarters in Beirut, killing 220 Marines, 18 sailors and three soldiers. It was the Corps' largest loss of life in a single day since the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945.

Among the survivors and veterans of the peacekeeping mission in Beirut, an invisible enemy was unleashing a deadly attack from within. Many of those Marines had been stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, from 1953 to 1987 and unknowingly ingested toxic chemicals that had polluted the groundwater there.

Keith "EZ" Ezell deployed to Beirut with 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. While he was not wounded in the attack, Ezell would later face an invisible foe lurking within his own body—an aggressive form of bladder cancer.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, scientific and medical evidence points to the development of certain diseases, including bladder cancer, as a result of toxins in the water at Camp Lejeune.

In his time of need, Ezell was able to turn to a fellow Marine Corps veteran of Beirut, Don Inns, who—as a DAV benefits advocate—has dedicated his post-service life to advocating for his fellow veterans and their families.



Keith Ezell stands in front of the Beirut Memorial outside of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

"I consider it an honor to assist veterans of any era and their families," Inns said. "But it feels incredibly special to be there for those who served in Beirut."

Because of Inns' diligence, the VA approved Ezell's claim for service-connected bladder cancer. Additional benefits—such as Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance—were also granted.

Unfortunately, Ezell lost his battle with bladder cancer on March 15, 2023.

"Before Keith had passed away, he wanted to make sure that his wife, Kim, was taken care of," Inns said. "Since his passing, I submitted Kim's claim for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, which the VA has granted. I'm glad that DAV could be there when Kim needed us most. That's a promise I made to Keith."

In 2022, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022, which was signed into law as part of the larger Honoring our PACT Act, gave veterans and their dependents the ability to file a civil suit against the federal government for harm suffered as a result of the toxic groundwater.



Ezell with fellow Marine veteran and DAV benefits advocate Don Inns, who also survived his tour in Beirut.

"It's critical that veterans and their family members affected by the toxic water at Camp Lejeune know that these lawsuit awards can come with a price," said DAV National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "This could reduce the amount of the award recipients actually receive from the court, but it would not affect their eligibility to apply for or receive VA benefits or health care."

Marszalek said DAV encourages all veterans to take the most appropriate actions for their individual situations, starting with an appointment with a DAV benefits advocate. Veterans and family members can locate the nearest DAV office by visiting benefitsquestions.org.

The intertwined tragedies of the Beirut bombing and the poisoned water at Camp Lejeune have irreversibly affected the lives of thousands. But for Inns, as well as the other Beirut veterans and those affected by the poisoned water at Camp Lejeune, the battle continues.

"We will keep fighting, whether for recognition of what we endured in Beirut as we attempted to bring peace to Lebanon or for those who were poisoned back home," Inns said. "Like the Marines, DAV is not afraid to stay in the fight, especially for those who cannot fight for themselves."

To get help or learn more about how DAV helps veterans, visit DAV.org.





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The Luckiest Man Alive

Why Jeffrey Mittman's experience made him who he is today.

I am the president and CEO of Bosma Enterprises, Indiana's largest statewide employer of people who are blind or visually impaired. I became Bosma's first legally blind CEO in August 2019, but my journey to become the luckiest man alive began long before then.

In 2005, I was a 35-year-old sergeant first class with 16 years of service under my belt on my fourth combat tour in the Middle East. I was serving as an adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior forces. On July 7, I was traveling to link up with my Iraqi battalion for a mission.

As I traveled under a highway overpass in Baghdad, an improvised explosive device went off. Metal tore through the vehicle directly into my face.

I woke up a month later to my wife Christy's voice. Wondering why she was in Baghdad, I tried to speak and open my eyes but couldn't. She explained we weren't in Baghdad but at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Later, a team of surgeons explained that my vision was gone forever.

As I processed the news that I had lost most of my vision, I learned the very same day that a close friend of mine died at the nearby Naval Medical Center. Two weeks prior, while I was unconscious at Walter Reed, he suffered a similar roadside attack not far from where my convoy was bombed.

It was a lot to absorb in a very short period.

But somehow, instead of falling deep into these emotions, this news helped pull me out. I was still alive. I still had a family to come home to: my wife and two daughters.



I was lucky.

From that day on, I promised Christy and myself we would move forward and past any challenges this new life presented. That feeling grew once I saw my daughters. Nothing had changed for them. Their dad was home, even if he was a little different than before.

I went through over 40 surgeries in five years. Christy and I traveled endlessly from our home in New Palestine, Indiana, to Walter Reed and back. We were fortunate to be supported by friends, family and neighbors during that time. Christy was vital to my

healing and later successes. She carried our family on her

You might wonder how I could consider myself the luckiest man alive. It's simple: I'm still alive.

I could have died that day in Baghdad, but I didn't. I also could have lost myself mentally that day, but I didn't. I could have faced depression for years, but I didn't. It took some time, but I picked myself up and put the pieces of this new life together.

Now, almost 20 years later, I've earned two graduate degrees from Ball State University, an MBA and a master's in executive development in public service. That led me to serve as the first legally blind president and CEO of Bosma Enterprises and as president of the National Association for the Employment of People Who Are Blind.

I might not be where I am today without my military experience and support during my recovery, and that's why I consider myself lucky.

MSgt (Ret.) Jeffrey Mittman is a 22-year U.S. Army veteran and now the president and CEO of Bosma Enterprises, an Indianapolis-based nonprofit dedicated to creating opportunities for people who are blind.



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Meet the Soldier-Wrestlers Going to the Olympics

By Stephen Warns

At the last Pan American Games, a competitive sports event amongst countries in North and South America, athletes showed off their skills before heading to the coveted 2024 Summer Olympics. This year, two U.S. Army Soldiers, Spc. Kamal Bey and Sgt. Ildar Hafizov are two veteran athletes whose passion for wrestling is taking them to their greatest athletic feat yet.

During the Greco-Roman wrestling portion of the Pan American Games, Bey gave himself a "C-level" performance. But "C-level" Bey was more than his foes could handle as the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program (WCAP) Soldier-Athlete won his first international gold medal and

"There is no better way to finish out a tournament like this than with a pin. It's definitely something worth celebrating. A dominant performance deserves a dominant end."

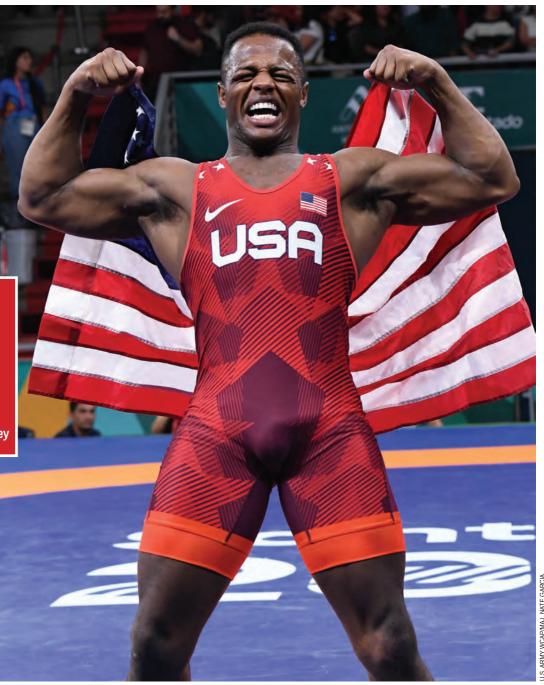
Spc. Kamal Bey

prepares for the season that will culminate when he joins the Olympics in Paris.

Bey dominated David Choc Huoc of the Independent Athletes Team 9-1 by technical superiority; edged Cuba's Yosvanys Pena Flores 4-3 in the quarterfinals; earned another technical superiority win over Chile's Eduardo Bernal 9-0; and pinned Brazil's Joilson De Brito with one second left to win gold.

"Out here, I made a lot of mistakes," Bey said. "At this point, all I can do is focus on myself and what I need to do to improve. This wasn't A-level Kamal Bey wrestling. It's not disrespect to my opponents. It's honestly just how I feel and how I rate my performance. We're going to get back into the gym and fix what needs to be fixed."

Bey's resilience never faltered throughout the Games. Against Pena Flores,



Spc. Kamal Bey of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program celebrates after he pinned Brazil's Joilson De Brito to win the 77kg gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling at the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile.

he was down 3-1 going into the final three minutes, but he continued to press the action and force Pena Flores into making mistakes.

"I knew going in he was going to be a formidable opponent," Bey said. "It was more staying calm and composed and thinking about the next move I was going to attempt. His whole thing was trying to slow me down. How to beat guys like that is not to let them slow me down and look for opportunities to score."

Bey found two opportunities toward the end of the match with two pushouts to secure the victory. Against De Brito, Bey was down 5-0, but again, he kept his composure and stormed back to score 12 unanswered points before winning by fall.

"Everything went according

to plan besides being down 5-0," Bey said. "I knew I could get this guy tired and just wait him out. I was waiting for opportunities to score, and when they were there, I took them. There is no better way to finish out a tournament like this than with a pin. It's definitely something worth celebrating. A dominant performance deserves a dominant end."

Meanwhile, Sgt. Ildar Hafizov captured his first Pan American Games gold medal by beating Ecuador's Jeremy Peralta 8-0 by technical superiority in the semifinals and holding off Cuba's Kevin De Armas 7-5 in the championship. Hafizov jumped out to a 7-0 lead but held off a late charge by De Armas.

"I was expecting a fight, because everyone here who steps on the mat, they want to win," Hafizov said. "I saw myself on the medal stand."

While he was pleased to win a gold medal, Hafizov acknowledged he still has room to improve before he competes in Paris later this year.

"Specifically, I have to work on my tactics to see where I am in a match," he said. "Just be on the attack and on the offense."

Both athletes credited WCAP for their continuing development as Soldier-Athletes, allowing them to be all they can be.

"It continues to provide me opportunities to compete against high-level competition overseas and gives me a support system beyond what most athletes are receiving." said Bey, who has been a Soldier-Athlete for three years. "Knowing that everything is taken care of has reduced a lot of pressure."

Hafizov, a Soldier-Athlete for the past eight years, echoes that sentiment.

"Our coaching staff (Shon Lewis, Spenser Mango and Bruce Robinson) and our teammates are helping us to get better every day," Hafizov said.

And Mango noticed their improvement during the Pan American Games.

"It was promising to see them go out there," Mango said. "We worked on quite a few things in camp before the Games, and I saw them go out there and execute, make those corrections and come out on top. That always feels really good."

Sources: DVIDS, U.S. Army



Sgt. Ildar Hafizov celebrates after beating Cuba's Kevin De Armas 7-5 for the 60kg Greco-Roman wrestling gold medal at the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile.

Navy Welcomes the First Woman Chief of Operations:

Admiral Lisa Franchetti

ith an impressive resume and a long-time commitment to the U.S. Navy, it's no wonder that Admiral Lisa Franchetti was nominated and assigned as the Chief of Naval Operations. In November, Franchetti was sworn in as the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations at a small ceremony in the Pentagon. She is the first woman to lead the U.S. Navy in its history. According to the BBC, this is also the first time that a woman was nominated to head a Pentagon military service branch. She was voted into the position on a 95-1 vote.

"I am honored to have been confirmed as the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations, and am proud to serve alongside the Sailors and civilians that make up our Navy team," Franchetti said. "I look forward to continuing to lead the world's most powerful Navy."

Franchetti has served with the U.S. Navy in some capacity for nearly 40 years. A

native of Rochester, New York, Franchetti received her commission in 1985 through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Program at Northwestern University. From there, Franchetti went on to serve on several operational tours, including as an auxiliaries officer and first division officer on USS Shenandoah; navigator and jumboization coordinator onboard USS Monongahela; operations officer on USS Moosbrugger; combat systems officer and chief staff officer for Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2; executive officer of USS Stout and assistant surface operations officer on USS George Washington Strike Group. She also commanded several ships of her own, most notably serving as the commander of Pacific Partnership 2010, embarked on the USNS Mercy.

In her flag assignments, she served as a commander for U.S. Naval Forces Korea; commander, Carrier Strike Group 9; commander, Carrier Strike Group 15;



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro swears in Adm. Lisa Franchetti as the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations in the Pentagon. Franchetti becomes the first woman service chief and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

chief of staff, Strategy, Plans and Policy (J-5) Joint Staff; commander, U.S. 6th Fleet; commander, Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO; deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and U.S. Naval Forces Africa; deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfighting Development, N7 and director for Strategy, Plans and Policy (J-5), Joint Staff. Most recently, Franchetti assumed the role of Vice Chief of Naval Operations which she held for a little over a year.

Her service has also earned Franchetti some of the highest military honors. These include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with four gold award stars, the National Defense Service Medal and many others.

Upon swearing into her historic role, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro said of Franchetti:

"It was my honor today to swear in Adm. Lisa M. Franchetti as the 33rd Chief of Naval Operations. I have the utmost confidence that [she] will faithfully fulfill the duties of this esteemed position. I look forward to working with her to lead our Force into the future as we continue to strengthen our maritime dominance, build a culture of warfighting excellence and enhance strategic partnerships."

Sources: U.S. Navy, BBC, Wikipedia



The new Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Lisa Franchetti delivers remarks after assuming the duties of CNO during the relinquishment of office ceremony for the 32nd Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Michael M. Gilday, at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland on Aug. 14, 2023.



t halftime of the Air Force vs. Army $oldsymbol{A}$ football game, Tuskegee Airman James Harvey III stood in a crisp new uniform in the south end zone. Here, Harvey was honorarily promoted to colonel in front of tens of thousands of football fans at Empower Field at Mile High in Denver, Colorado. This recognition comes nearly 60 years after retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 1965.

Harvey, who will be 101 in July, is among the few World War II Tuskegee Airmen still alive today. He was drafted into the Army in April 1943 and served as an engineer in the Army Corps until he was accepted into the Tuskegee Flight School's Aviation Cadet Training Program. Upon graduation in 1944, Harvey was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron in Godman Field, Kentucky, which never saw combat.

In 1949, Harvey was transferred to an F-80 squadron at the Misawa Air Base in Japan, where he served as a flight commander and fighter pilot during the Korean War. During this time, he flew 140 missions, earned several Air Medals, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and became the first Black jet fighter pilot to engage in combat in the Korean War.

After the war, Harvey continued to serve at airbases in numerous capacities in California, Wisconsin, Michigan, Colorado and Newfoundland. Some of the titles he held

included flying safety officer, fighter training officer, instrument instructor pilot, aircraft test pilot and weapons director staff officer. Harvey retired in 1965 and accumulated 22 years of service between the Army Air Corps and the United States Air Force. Besides his Distinguished Flying Cross, Harvey has also been honored with an Air Medal with 10 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Distinguished Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal and a Congressional Gold Medal awarded to all Tuskegee Airmen in 2007.

Harvey's pinning was performed by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles O. Brown Jr., Sen. Michael Bennett (D-Colo.), and Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall. His two daughters, Alysyn Green and Kathy Harvey, and his niece, Karen Jackson, were also in attendance and pinned colonel on his shoulders.

Also present during the ceremony were the Chairman's wife, Sharene Brown, newly sworn-in Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin, Gen. Mark Kelly, Commander at Air Combat Command, and Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark, Superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

"Because of his work breaking barriers, I can stand here today as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," said Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., during the ceremony. Brown, the former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, was

the first Black service chief in U.S. history. He is only the second Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. "James, I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank you for breaking barriers, and it's my distinct honor to promote you to colonel today."

Following the pinning ceremony, two historic aircraft conducted a stadium flyover: a P-47 Thunderbolt, like those flown by Tuskegee Airmen from Harvey's 332nd Fighter Wing, which won the propellerclass segment of the first-ever Air Force gunnery meet in 1949, and a P-51 Mustang, flown by the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

"It was a magnificent honor to watch thousands of Airmen, Guardians and Soldiers cheer on Colonel Harvey when our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. C.Q. Brown, promoted him from being the Air Force's oldest lieutenant colonel to the newest colonel in the U.S. Air Force." said AFA's Executive Vice President Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.), who took part in the end zone ceremony as a distinguished guest. "The Air & Space Forces Association is proud to 'issue' him a uniform fitting of his senior rank and stature as a Tuskegee Airman, combat fighter pilot and leader."

Sources: Air and Space Forces Association, Wikipedia

A Look into the Marines' **Technology Hub**

By Cpl. Andrew Bray



arine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) has emerged as a critical center for innovation within the United States Marine Corps. The largest Marine Corps training facility of its kind, MCAGCC has become an essential testing ground for emerging technologies.

Marines with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG), Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command, in concert with the Office of Naval Research (ONR), tested a quadruped robotic platform referred to as the "robotic goat" on Sept. 9, 2023. TTECG and ONR test fired an M72 LAW (light anti-armor weapon) rocket launcher

from the robotic goat. The robotic goat can carry various sensors or weapon systems that would otherwise be carried by a Marine.

"Instead of having

a Marine handle the weapon system, manipulate the safeties, we could put a remote trigger mechanism on it that allowed it to all be done remotely," said 1st Lt. Aaron Safadi, officer in charge, emerging technology integration section, TTECG. "The Marine could be behind cover and concealment, the weapon system could go forward, and the Marine could

manipulate the safeties from a safe place while allowing that weapon system to get closer to its target."

MCAGCC is the largest Marine Corps base with an abundance of ranges

> that allows for robotic platforms, augmented reality and artificial intelligence systems to be tested. Additionally, MCAGCC hosts several

large-scale exercises every year, bringing in an array of personnel to gain insight on how to utilize these robotics.

According to Safadi, MCAGCC's suitability for testing emerging technology lies in its permissive live-fire environment and its wealth of knowledge resources. The presence of TTECG at MCAGCC, combined with the continuous influx of diverse training units each year, provides a unique opportunity to observe and study the standard operating procedures and tactics, techniques and procedures

of much of the Marine Corps. This wealth of experience and knowledge makes MCAGCC the ideal location for testing and refining new military technology.

Large-scale exercises, such as Marine Air-Ground Task Force Warfighting Exercise (MWX), gives Marines the opportunity to test emerging technology in an unscripted force-on-force exercise. This enables Marines to see how to implement new technology, and how to counter it as well. The robotic platforms being tested at MWX can range from small, unmanned aircraft systems to the HDT Hunter Wolf, a 2,200-pound unmanned vehicle capable of carrying various sensors or heavy weaponry into the battlespace.

Marines at MCAGCC have also began implementing virtual realities to assist in training. The Battle Simulation Center has developed virtual training technology in conjunction with ONR to train Joint Tactical Air Controllers and Forward Air Controllers in a more safe, economic and realistic environment.

Force Design takes on an important role in the ongoing testing and integration of robotics at the MCAGCC. Testing emerging technologies, such as robotics, aligns with Force Design's objectives by providing a platform for evaluating the practicality and effectiveness of these robotics systems for use in the battlefields of the future.

MCAGCC contributes to the Marine Corps' broader goal of ensuring Marines are equipped with the most advanced tools and capabilities for future warfare scenarios.

Source: U.S. Marines



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From Frontlines to Food Drives:

Continuing to Serve Post-Retirement

By Atalaya Sergi

Cervice, sacrifice and Scamaraderie define a military career—you don't just walk away from values like that. That's why many veterans are still driven to serve. Through volunteering locally, you have the opportunity to employ the experience, insights and expertise you gained serving our country to help people.

As you think about what comes next after your military career, consider joining more than 12,000 veterans who serve as volunteers in AmeriCorps Seniors programs. We connect volunteers aged 55 and over

with local organizations and service projects based on their abilities, experience, interests and community needs. In addition to other activities, AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers support disaster relief, staff crisis hotlines, deliver meals, grow community gardens, build houses, support homebound neighbors, tutor students and support vulnerable community members, including your fellow veterans.

We have three programs: the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program and RSVP.

Let's meet some of our

veteran volunteers who are helping to combat loneliness, preserve independence and ensure that we leave no one behind.

Combat Loneliness

Barry Russack retired from the Navy 30 years ago. Today, he is an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer with RSVP serving in Connecticut's Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA). TVCCA operates and organizes several Veterans Coffeehouses, where veterans and their spouses gather twice a month to socialize, drink coffee and receive vital

information about available benefits and resources. The program hosts a range of speakers on topics such as healthy aging, retirement planning, new laws that affect veterans and caregiving services.

Russack assists with setup, makes coffee and greets attendees upon arrival. Russack's trained therapy dog, Rosie, has the ability to sniff out anyone who needs additional comfort and emotional support, allowing Russack to approach those individuals and offer them a receptive ear and warm social interaction. The team





at TVCCA say Russack has the kindest heart and service is his calling.

Preserve Independence

At 80 years old, Lou Lopez remains energetic and active as a longtime volunteer in the Senior Companion Program in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In his seven years with AmeriCorps, the Navy veteran has worked with nearly 13,000 primarily homebound clients ranging from ages 51 to 102 and dealing with conditions from visual impairments to Parkinson's disease.

The support Lopez provides through respite care, running errands and being a friend helps give these people independence and dignity. He has a special affection for veterans, whom he also serves as a board member on the Veterans Committee of Wyoming Legal Aid.

Leave No One Behind

Army veteran James Hunter is an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer in the Foster Grandparent Program in Kansas City, Missouri. After serving in the military, he struggled to overcome personal challenges in civilian life, including homelessness. Hunter sought help and turned his life around which inspired him to help others.

Today, he is a role model who mentors second-grade students in an impoverished area. Hunter nobly applies the creed, "leave no man behind," in his local community. He's a guide and shield protecting the next generation from some of the challenges he experienced.

You may be wondering where you may fit in amongst AmeriCorps Seniors' more than 140,000 volunteers. Whether you can give only a few hours or up to 40 per week, we have

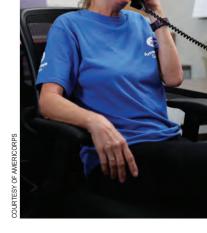
hundreds of organizations across three programs.

Ways to Serve

The Foster Grandparent **Program:** AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers who serve as "grandparents" help children with emotional development, socialization and academic performance. Foster grandparents may participate in activities such as reading to at-risk children, assisting in a classroom or after-school program, or providing one-onone mentoring and tutoring.

The Senior Companion **Program:** AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers help older adults who may struggle with illness or other challenges live more independently. From befriending homebound community members to helping clients with daily tasks and transportation, many lasting friendships have been formed through this program.

RSVP: Local organizations in RSVP focus across six areasdisaster services, economic



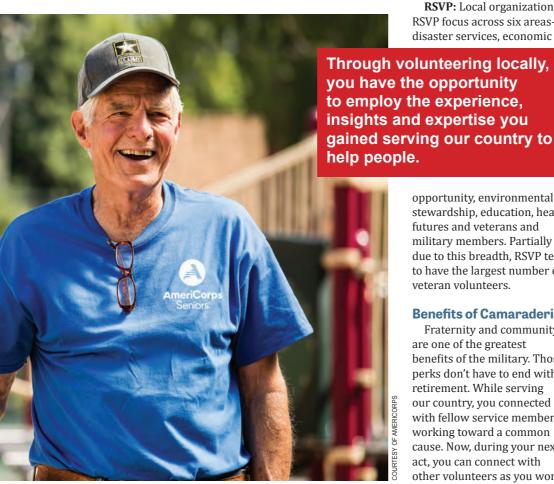
towards improving your community.

Numerous studies, including the multi-decade Harvard Study of Adult Development, confirm that social ties and a sense of purpose are necessary for happiness. The Surgeon General describes loneliness and isolation as hazardous to individual and national health. Staying engaged and connected to people in your community through volunteering can help you maintain your health and sense of well-being.

A study published by AmeriCorps found that 74% of volunteers reported less depression, 84% of volunteers reported improved or stable health after one year of service and 88% reported feeling more connected and less isolated.

If you are 55 or older, AmeriCorps Seniors can help you find a nearby service program that matches your interests and schedule. The AmeriCorps Seniors Pathfinder tool is an easy way to search for local programs. To learn more about how you can continue to serve your community, visit AmeriCorps.gov/YourMoment.

Atalaya Sergi leads AmeriCorps Seniors, the federal grantmaking office of AmeriCorps that is focused on engaging people aged 55 and over in outcomes oriented service. She has more than 20 years of experience in service, community engagement and education, working in public and nonprofit sectors to bring private and public organizations together to ensure people of all ages, as well as those living in underserved communities,



opportunity, environmental stewardship, education, healthy futures and veterans and military members. Partially due to this breadth, RSVP tends to have the largest number of veteran volunteers.

Benefits of Camaraderie

Fraternity and community are one of the greatest benefits of the military. Those perks don't have to end with retirement. While serving our country, you connected with fellow service members working toward a common cause. Now, during your next act, you can connect with other volunteers as you work

VLI Lawyers for Warriors Had a Record-Breaking Year

By Lydia Liberio, Esq.

ttendees arriving at the November 6, 2023 Veterans Legal Institute (VLI) annual gala received the royal treatment, welcomed by a festive patriotic balloon arch on the red carpet for photos with the radiant Los Angeles Laker Girls and welcome champagne for everyone. The annual gala helps fund the mighty VLI team's critical work, helping approximately 1,000 veterans every year. In its 10 years of operation, 10,000 veterans have received urgent pro bono legal assistance with

housing, employment, estate planning, student loan and GI bill issues, family law, expungements and veterans' benefits. This year's event set a record for the most money raised in VLI history-\$300,000 in one night to fund these lifesaving services for their most deserving clients.

Every year, event sponsors, local pro bono attorneys, veteran advocates and silent auction donors outdo the spectacular array of auction items. This year's auction included very unique items

like a Park Club membership, luxury wines and liquor, private chef & sommelier packages, historic photos of the Tuskegee Airmen and historic presidential challenge coins. An exciting bidding war erupted over the private luxury shopping experience for four with custom men's clothing by Mark Pomerantz, all for the worthy cause. Throughout the night, guests dined on delicious food from veteran-owned Turnip Rose and sipped wine donated from wineries across the state. Guests were treated to

live jazz music and plenty of good company.

A highlight of the night was the Major General William Lyon Air Museum, featuring military planes, vehicles and a live soundtrack from the airstrip runway, punctuating the celebration with the roar of airplanes taking off in the distance, putting the contributions of our service community into historical context.

The California Department of Veterans Affairs received the Community Partner of the Year Award for its role in



VLI STAFF. PHOTO BY ZAK LARA, LENS OF LARA

assisting 1.6 million California veterans annually. Attorney Sam Eagle, a Vietnam veteran who became an investigator, attorney and Orange County Superior Court Judge Pro Tem, was honored as the Attorney of the Year for his work on VLI pro bono cases—after a short speech, he wowed the crowd with a Sinatra-style serenade. VLI board member and founder of women-owned business Dawson & Dawson, Inc. search firm, Kathy Dawson, CSP, was recognized for her decades of service as a recruiter partnering with businesses to help former military personnel transition from the front lines to the front office. Kathy's business partner, Larry Dawson, served as a naval Engineering Auxiliary Officer, and Dawson & Dawson empowers employees to spend 5% of their workweek making a difference with significant causes, such as Working Wardrobes, Second Harvest Food Bank and VLI.

California State Guard Commanding General, Major General Jay Coggan (ret.), currently serves as the Chief Counsel for Cyber Operations in the California Military Department—he was honored as the Veteran of the Year for his decades of military service in different roles, starting with three tours with Naval Patrol Squadron One, to the present critical infrastructure defense role. In 1916, U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker founded the BakerHostetler law firm, and a century later, the Law Firm of the Year honoree still prioritizes veteran legal matters as part of its pro bono agenda, donating 25,000 hours of attorney time to various causes including VLI. VLI is honored to celebrate those in the community who are committed to serving our California veteran community.

The best part of the annual gala is the networking





USMC Iraq Combat Veteran and Singer/Songwriter Elliott McKenzie performing the National Anthem.

among the legal and related industries supporting the nonprofit's efforts and the collective impact of VLI cofounder Antoinette Naddour, Katie Binkley, the VLI staff team and everyone who joined the event live or by pre-event auction bidding.

The funds raised from this evening are pivotal in serving the veteran community. In 2022 alone, VLI secured over \$2.3 million in lump

sum payments for disabled veterans. This doesn't even include the value of the pro bono legal services provided every day—for example, the average cost of an estate plan is around \$3,000, while VLI provides this service free of charge. Donating to VLI or sponsoring the annual Lawyers for Warriors Gala is truly an investment in the Southern California community.

2024 marks 10 years since the founding of VLI, and the organization is nowhere near slowing down. To get involved in fundraising efforts, contact Antoinette Naddour at annadour@vetslegal.com or Katie Binkley at kbinkley@ vetslegal.com. To learn more about VLI and its mission. please visit VetsLegal.org.

Cheers to a successful year and many more to come!

Gary Sinise Receives the Heroes Linked Distinguished Service Award



Gary Sinise, the celebrated actor, director, producer and unwavering veterans advocate, received the prestigious Heroes Linked Distinguished Service Award at the organization's annual gala on Nov. 17, 2023 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. The award was presented by the actor and 2022 recipient, Joe Mantegna.

The evening was an unforgettable event in recognition of Sinise's unwavering commitment to humanitarian work on behalf of our nation's veterans, service members, first responders, heroes and defenders. The



(L-R) Mark Graham, Mary McCormack, Gary Sinise, Joe Mantegna and Carol Graham.



Medal of Honor recipients (L-R) MSG Leroy Petry, SPC Jim McCloughan, SSG Ryan Pitts, COL Jack Jacobs, LTC William D. Swenson and CSM Gary Littrell.

event consisted of a live auction, a captivating musical performance by singer/ songwriter J.D. Hinton and the presence of esteemed VIPs, including Medal of Honor recipients and Major General (Ret.) Mark and Carol Graham. Several celebrities also made a virtual appearance, sending heartfelt tribute videos to Sinise. These guests included Ed Harris, John Malkovich, Bonnie Hunt, Dean Cain and DB Sweeney.

James Colbert, executive director of Heroes Linked, remarked, "For some of the 200,000+ service members who separate or retire from the military each year, it's no secret that transitioning to civilian life can be difficult. One of the biggest disconnects between transitioning service members and potential employers is that few people know how to translate military skills to the corporate civilian world.

"Gary Sinise is not only a renowned Hollywood figure but also an advocate dedicated to the well-being of our nation's heroes. Through his tireless efforts, he has become a beacon of support for veterans and active-duty military personnel, leaving an indelible mark on

the hearts of those he serves. He is most deserving of this award."

Several veteran and activeduty service members were recognized alongside Sinise for their bravery and contributions to the military communities. These recipients consisted of:

- COL Jack Jacobs
- LTC Will Swenson (active duty)
- CSM Gary Littrell
- SSG Ryan Pitts
- MSG Leroy Petry
- SPC Jim McCloughan Heroes Linked is a nonprofit organization committed to aiding veterans, military



Mona Lisa Faris, our founder and publisher, with Gary Sinise. To share in the moment, visit usveteransmagazine.com/ gary-sinise-usvm.

spouses, service members in transition and Gold Star family survivors. Their services encompass professional development, secure housing via their new Heroes Home Repair Program, grant-based assistance for the collegebound children of Gold Star families and access to a network of mentors, among other services.



Gary Sinise receiving the Heroes Linked Distinguished Service Award.

BBBC23 Inspires Action

The 5th Annual Business ■ Beyond the Battlefield Conference (BBBC23) continued its success as a premier business development experience for militaryconnected entrepreneurs. The University of Texas Arlington Veterans Business Outreach Center (UTAVBOC) hosted the event in the American Dream City. More than 280 registered participants from 23 states were educated, trained and inspired during the annual three-day event, which included professionally curated business-to-business networking opportunities, a small business marketplace and an entrepreneur training symposium designed to increase awareness of and facilitate access to entrepreneurial development resources that inspire action leading to military-connected business formation, growth or recovery.

The conference was more than a social gathering and included the Military Entrepreneur Challenge (MEC) powered by the Second Service Foundation. MEC is a three-part event led by the Second Service Foundation with support from its partners: the U.S. Small **Business Administration's** Community Navigator Pilot Program, the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Holland & Knight LLP and the Brewing the American Dream Program by Sam Adams. MEC includes a speed coaching session, a private pitch session to a judging panel and finally, an opportunity to pitch business ideas to a live audience for a chance to win a small business grant.

Bryant "Griff" Griffith is a Marine Corps veteran and the founder and CEO of JAWS – Junk And Waste Solutions. He is one of 12 cohort members





in the UTAVBOC Spark for Veterans Incubator, where the curriculum included pitch preparation. Griff and five other cohort members were among the nine business owners selected to pitch in the MEC at BBBC23. Five cohort members were awarded \$1,000 grants.

Griffith was the overall MEC winner at BBBC23. receiving a \$2,000 grant, a \$5,000 promotional package and \$20,000 of in-kind legal services from Holland & Knight LLP. "Waste removal is about more than picking up trash. I will use the MEC award to launch the JAWS franchise model and 'pick up the lives' of veterans in Florida and Ohio," said Griffith. Patrick E. Alcorn, senior director of the UTAVBOC, commented, "Griff's business success and his desire to empower other veterans is an example of the military-connected entrepreneur ecosystem at its best, i.e., veterans empowering veterans."

UTAVBOC provides collaborative, handson, interactive learning

opportunities, including classroom instruction and opportunities to work with experienced coaches and mentors, attend workshops and develop connections. Through training programs, one-onone business counseling, accredited university courses. practical seminars, relevant workshops, expert referrals and veteran-focused outreach activities, UTAVBOC serves as the SBA resource for veterans. UTAVBOC services are funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the SBA to empower transitioning veterans, disabled veterans, National Guard, active and reserve component members and their spouses to grow the U.S. economy and its employment base while adding value to the communities in which they live and serve.

The UTAVBOC Spark for Veterans Program provides six months of free coworking space (in Arlington, Texas) with in-person, interactive, facilitated incubator technical assistance, followed by six months of one-on-one business counseling, practical seminars, relevant workshops, pitch competition preparation and expert referrals to a nationwide network of mentors and capital partners. Additionally, program participants gain a dedicated cohort of eight to 12 peers who hold each other accountable for business growth and success.

The Second Service Foundation is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that supports military entrepreneurs through coaching, resources, capital and an innovative mentorship program to help entrepreneurs scale from startup to the stars. Launched in 2016 on Veterans Day, The Second Service Foundation (formerly StreetShares Foundation) set out to provide comprehensive resources for military community entrepreneurs. They are cultivating the American Dream for military businesses. As a private foundation, they aim to inspire, educate and support veterans, military spouses and Gold Star families as they grow their enterprise.





7th Annual Conference November 13-14, 2023 SAN DIEGO RECAP

The 7th Annual VIB Network National Conference in San Diego on November 13th and 14th was a huge success and our biggest conference to date. Connecting Veteran businesses to Corporations and Government Agencies to learn about contracting opportunities is the cornerstone of this conference. Thank you for your support and we hope to see you next year!

The numbers are in...

- 558 Registered Attendees from across the United States.
 - 47.2% Veteran Businesses
 - 31.7% Corporations
 - 12.1% Small/Diverse Businesses
 - 9% Government Agencies
- 26 Tactical Networking Tables, 214 Participants
- 75 Interactive Ice Breaker Participants
- 23 Veteran Business Exhibitors in the Veteran Business Marketplace
- 76 Exhibitor Tables in the Opportunity Expo

Congratulations 2023 Above & Beyond Winners!

- Veteran Business of the Year: Servexo
- Corporation of the Year: Bristol Myers Squibb
- Teaming Partners of the Year: The Patriot Group and OneSource Supply
- · Government Agency of the Year: U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services
- Bravo Zulu: Vaughn Williams, III

SAVE THE 2024 DATES:













Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 2024

ASALH - Black History Month Virtual Event

February 1-29 asalh.org

USPAACC Innovation Symposium

February 15-16 Washington, D.C. uspaacc.com

BEYA Stem

February 15-17 Baltimore, MD intouch.ccmag.com

NAAAS

Virtual Event

February 15-17 Austin, TX naaas.org

VIVE Event

February 25-28 Los Angeles, CA viveevent.com

Value of a Veteran Conference

February 27-29 San Diego, CA veteranrecruitingconference. com

Ultimate Corporate Communications Conference CCOs Driving Results

February 29 New York, NY conference-board.org

City Career Fair Diversity Employment Day

Multiple Events See Calendar citycareerfair.com

From Day One Forum

Multiple Events See Calendar fromdayone.com

NCRF Black College Expo Virtual Event

Multiple Events See Calendar thecollegeexpo.org

NVTSI REBOOT Virtual Workshop

Multiple Events See Calendar nvtsi.org

Small Business Expo

Multiple Events See Calendar thesmallbusinessexpo.com

Hire GI

Multiple Events See Calendar hiregi.com

MARCH 2024

San Diego Festival of Science & Engineering

March 2 San Diego, CA usasciencefestival.org

UNIDOS Changemakers Summit

March 4-6 Washington, D.C. unidosus.org

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference

March 5-6 Atlanta, GA conference-board.org/ conferences

NAACP Image Awards

March 6 Los Angeles, CA naacp.org

NOBLE 2024 William R. Bracey Symposium

March 7-9 Atlanta, GA noblenational.org

SHPE - Regional Leadership Development Conferences

March 7-9 Costa Mesa, CA & Indianapolis, IN shpe.org

Prospanica Leadership Summit

March 7-9 Dallas, TX prospanica.org

Out Women in Business (ROMBA)

March 8 Los Angeles, CA reachingoutmba.org

HACR Latina Empow(h)er Summit

March 11-13 Dallas, TX hacr.org

SHPE - Regional Leadership Development Conferences

March 14-16 San Antonio, TX shpe.org

Abilities Expo

March 15-17 Los Angeles, CA abilities.com

CSUN

Virtual Event

March 18-22 Anaheim, CA csun.edu

2024 Annual Employee Health Care Conference -San Diego

March 19-20 San Diego, CA conference-board.org

WBENC

March 19-22 Denver, CO wbenc.org

Veteran EDGE

March 20-22 Addison, TX ivmf.syracuse.edu

NSBE 50 Convention

March 20-24 Atlanta, GA nsbe.org

City Career Fair Diversity Employment Day

Multiple Events See Calendar citycareerfair.com

NCRF Black College Expo Virtual Event

Multiple Events See Calendar thecollegeexpo.org

NVTSI REBOOT Virtual Workshop

Multiple Events See Calendar nvtsi.org

Hire GI

Multiple Events See Calendar hiregi.com

From Day One Forum

Multiple Events See Calendar fromdayone.co

Small Business Expo

Multiple Events See Calendar thesmallbusinessexpo.com

APRIL 2024

NFBPA Convention

April 3-7 Baltimore, MD nfbpa.org

SHPE - Regional Leadership Development Conferences

April 4-6 Miami, FL shpe.org

CSAVR 2023 Spring Conference

April 6-10 Bethesda, MD csavr.org

The ARC Disability Policy Seminar

April 8-10 Washington, D.C. thearc.org

HACU Annual Capital Forum

April 9-10 Washington, D.C. hacu.net

Employing U.S. Vets Conference

April 11 New York, NY employingusvets.com

WiCvS

April 11-13 Nashville, TN wicys.org

ASHHRA Conference

April 14-16 Fort Worth, TX ashhra.org

NAVUB Conference

April 15-19 Reno, NV navub.org

SHRM Talent Conference & Expo 2024

April 16-17 Las Vegas, NV shrm.org

2024 Annual Employee **Health Care Conference -**

New York April 16-17 New York, NY conference-board.org

GLAAACC Economics Dinner

April 19 Los Angeles, CA glaaacc.org

MANRRS - 38th Annual Training Conference & Career Expo

April 20-24 Chicago, IL manrrs.org

USHCC Legislative Summit

April 22-24 Washington, D.C. ushcclegislative.com

Women in Tech Global Conference

April 23-25 Hybrid Event womentech.net

NAWLEE 28th Annual Conference

April 23-26 Las Vegas, NV nawlee.org

ABRCMS Spring Symposium Virtual Event

April 24 abrcms.org

Express Connect (East Coast)

April 25 Boston, MA vibnetwork.org

HACE Leadership Summit

April 25-26 Chicago, IL haceonline.org

Women Veterans Engagement Conference

April 27 Online & In-Person womenveteransengage.com

Diversity Alliance for Science - East Coast Conference

April 30 - May 2 Newark, NJ diversityallianceforscience.

From Day One Forum **Virtual Event**

Multiple Events See Calendar fromdayone.co

City Career Fair **Diversity Employment Day**

Multiple Events See Calendar citycareerfair.com

Small Business Expo

Multiple Events See Calendar thesmallbusinessexpo.com

Hire GI

Multiple Events See Calendar hiregi.com

NCRF Black College Expo Virtual Event

Multiple Events See Calendar thecollegeexpo.org

NVTSI REBOOT Virtual Workshop

Multiple Events See Calendar nvtsi.org

MAY 2024

Military Mojo

May 2-3 San Antonio, TX militarymojo.org

Abilities Expo

May 2-4 New York, NY abilities.com

NCOA Conference

May 6-8 Arlington, VA ncoa.org

SAME's Joint Engineering Training Conference & Expo (JETC)

May 14-16 Orlando, FL samejetc.org

NMSDC Minority Business Economics Forum

May 14-16 Seattle, WA nmsdc.org

NAWBO Women's Business Conference

May 15-16 Sacramento, CA nawbo.org

WPO National Conference

May 15-17 Colorado Springs, CO women-presidents.com

City Career Fair Diversity Employment Day

Multiple Events See Calendar citycareerfair.com

Small Business Expo

Multiple Events See Calendar thesmallbusinessexpo.com

From Day One Forum

Multiple Events See Calendar fromdayone.co

Hire GI

Multiple Events See Calendar hiregi.com

NVTSI REBOOT Virtual Workshop

Multiple Events See Calendar nvtsi.org

Conference/event dates are subject to change. Please visit organization websites for the very latest information. Let us know about any national career fairs, expos, training or conferences focusing on assisting our veterans and/or their spouses. Contact partnerships@diversitycomm.net or 855.411.8786

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Veterans exposed to toxic fumes, Agent Orange, or burn pits during service may be eligible for benefits and health care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Find out how new presumptive conditions and locations for toxic exposure may impact your eligibility.

