

Troops to Teachers helps service members continue to serve

By Julia LeDoux
Pentagram Staff Writer

When members of the nation's armed forces transition out of the military, sometimes the desire to continuing serving never leaves them.

That's where Troops to Teachers comes in.

The nationwide program, which helps service members transition to a career in the field of education, began in 1993, said Charlie Foster of the Troops to Teachers Virginia Center at William & Mary University in Williamsburg.

"It's funded by DoD, so it's free for participants," he said. "Over the course of the entire program 21,000 folks have gone from being in the military to being in classrooms."

Foster presented a workshop on the program May 2 at the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Education Center, where he said there is definitely a teacher shortage in Virginia.

"This, to me, is a problem but an opportunity for folks who are transitioning out who felt like while they were in the military the training parts were one of their favorite parts of service," he said.

Knowledge and experience that is gained as a result of military training can be used in the classroom, Foster continued.



Charlie Foster, with the Troops to Teachers Virginia Center, discusses the nationwide program that helps service members transition to a career in the field of education May 2 at the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Education Center.

PHOTO BY JULIA LEDOUX

"As you get promoted in the military eventually you are training folks who are subordinate to you," he explained. "They really have a lot of teaching experience."

There is also a long-established connection between military service and teaching, said Foster.

"I have found a whole lot of people who have a whole

lot of military service in their Families and a whole lot of educators," he said. "These are both service professions."

One of the things veterans have identified as a benefit to being a teacher is serving not only the country, but the community in which they live.

"They say what I want to do to enhance this community is through education," he said.

Foster, whose day-to-day job is helping people to obtain their teaching license, said Troops to Teachers is not a one size fit all program.

"Everybody has a different set of education and experience and they have a different criteria for how they want to go into teaching," he said.

Those who are interested in participating in the

program should apply to the national program by visiting proudtoserveagain.com and fill out the application, which will ask for the top three states the applicant wants to teach in.

"Then, we come up with a timeline," he said. "Sometimes that includes going back to school. I have people who have master's degrees and doctorates who sometimes go back to school."

A bachelor's degree is required, but applicants can be pursuing their four-year degree and become part of the Troops to Teachers program, he said.

"What would ideally happen is they would change their major to education, that is called the traditional route," he said. "If you do a traditional, state-approved teacher education program, you will get your five-year renewable license at the end of that."

Foster also can help applicants with their resumes, look for job openings across the state and can even do mock interviews.

To learn more about Troops to Teachers, visit troops-toteachersvirginia.org; email tttvirginia@wm.edu; or call 757-221-3415.

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Past Mr Olympia visits Fort Myer Fitness Center



Four-time Mr. Olympia Jay Cutler (left) chats with service members and Fort Myer Fitness Center patrons May 2 in the free weight room of the fitness center on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall. Cutler was on base to meet service members and sign autographs as part of May being Military Appreciation Month.

PHOTO BY JIM DRESBACH

Simple click can provide meals

By Julia LeDoux
Pentagram Staff Writer

A Gaithersburg, Maryland, based organization has launched an effort to purchase fresh, chef-prepared meals for service members, their Families, and veterans living in the National Capital Region.

Judy O'Connor, founder and CEO of Like Neighbors, said the effort, called 5,000 Meals, will also donate meals to a Washington, D.C., area Fisher House comfort home where military Families stay free of charge while

their loved one receives medical care at a nearby military hospital.

Like Neighbors got its start in 2014, when the 2-year-old son of a friend of O'Connor's living in California became ill and was hospitalized for a year.

"He is cancer free, so there is a happy ending to this," she said. "But, this was a horrendous year for this family. Their little boy, for pretty much a whole year, was in the pediatric (intensive care unit)."

O'Connor immediately began brain storming ways she could help her friends from her home

in Maryland.

"I thought I'd send them a dinner one night," she said. "One of their local friends posted on an update page that they could use meals."

O'Connor then spent the better portion of a day attempting to arrange a meal delivery. She had to work out details such as figuring out how many people would be eating; what time the family would be home or if they would eat at the hospital; and what restaurants would deliver.

"It should not be this hard for someone to send a meal to some-

body who is going through a time like that," she said.

That experience served as the inspiration for starting Like Neighbors, which began with meal deliveries in the Washington, D.C. area.

"People are using Like Neighbors in the D.C. area to send meals to Family and friends at Walter Reed National Medical Center and area Fisher House locations."

With May designated as National Military Appreciation Month, O'Connor said the group decided to take their effort to provide 5,000 meals nationwide.

"These meals can be donated by anyone in the country," she said. "They can either send a meal gift card if they know a service member, military Family or veteran in the D.C. area or they can donate a meal to one of the D.C. area Fisher Houses."

"It's essentially an act of kindness," she said. "The meal donations to Fisher House start at \$15. It takes less than a minute to go on the website and make a donation. These are the ones who are giving everything every day for use. I feel like it's the least we can do to give back."

The program is also donating 20 percent of its proceeds to the Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors.

"We want to be able to say thank you to our military in a real way," O'Connor said. "This is a way people nationwide can do that."

Corporate sponsors are also spreading the word about the effort among their workforces, she said.

To make a donation, visit www.likeneighbors.com/5000-meals.

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