

COVER STORY

ROOFING STORIES AND EVENTS THAT ARE MAKING HEADLINES

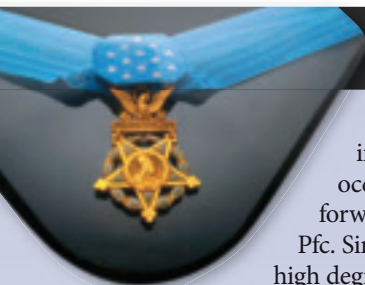
UNIONS TAKING CARE OF OUR VETERANS

On May 7, 2010, Roofers International President Kinsey Robinson and AFL-CIO Richard Trumka attended a parade honoring some very special veterans at Marine Barracks in Washington, DC. That night, three veteran Marines—all recipients of the Medal of Honor—were recognized for their heroic service to our country. The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed on members of the U.S. armed forces who distinguish themselves “conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.”

These three men fought under extraordinary circumstances and acted exceptionally. We honor them for the cou-

rageousness of their actions. But every day, American men and women in the military put their lives on the line to promote freedom and end terrorism, here and abroad. After they’ve served their time, many are left struggling—for jobs, for healthcare, and for a way to raise their families comfortably.

America’s trade unions have always backed our brothers and sisters in the military, and we want to do all we can to champion veterans’ rights and provide for those who are transitioning to civilian life. The AFL-CIO and the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers strongly support two programs that work towards these goals: The Union Veterans Council and Helmets to Hardhats.



Medal of Honor Recipient, 58 Years Later

While accompanying a patrol en route to occupy a combat outpost forward of friendly lines, Pfc. Simanek exhibited a high degree of courage and a resolute spirit of self-sacrifice in protecting the lives of his fellow marines. With his unit ambushed by an intense concentration of enemy mortar and small-arms fire, and suffering heavy casualties, he was forced to seek cover with the remaining members of the patrol in a nearby trench line. Determined to save his comrades when a hostile grenade was hurled into their midst, he unhesitatingly threw himself on the deadly missile absorbing the shattering violence of the exploding charge in his body and shielding his fellow marines from serious injury or death. Gravely wounded as a result of his heroic action, Pfc. Simanek, by his daring initiative and great personal valor in the face of almost certain death, served to inspire all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.



From left: International President Kinsey Robinson, Medal of Honor recipient Robert E. Simanek and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. Private First Class Simanek’s story of valor, which occurred during the Korean War in 1952, is described in his citation (at left).



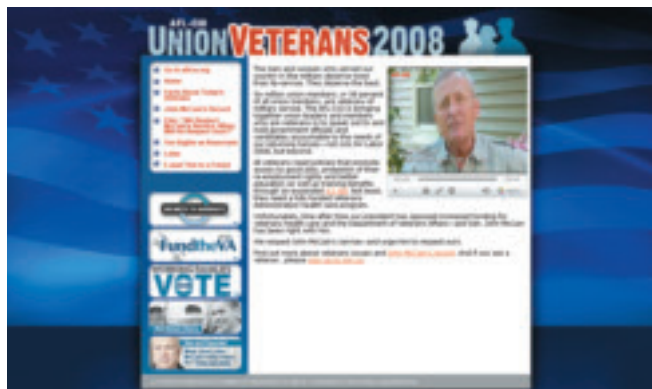
Union Veterans Council Advocating for Veterans

Recognizing the need for better communication between the government and military veterans, the AFL-CIO has formed the Union Veterans Council (UVC), an advocacy group for improving public policy on veterans' issues.

The Council is comprised of member unions of the AFL-CIO including the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers. International President Kinsey Robinson, a veteran of the Marine Corps, proudly sits on the Governing Board along with over 40 other labor leaders, many of whom are themselves military veterans.

The purpose of the Union Veterans Council is to bring together union leaders and union members who are veterans to speak out on veterans' issues and influence public policy to improve the quality of life for U.S. veterans and their families. The two primary areas of focus for veterans are access to good jobs and access to quality health care.

The Union Veterans Council will hold government officials accountable to the needs of military veterans and their families. It will make our positions on veterans' issues known to candidates for public office. The UVC will also encourage union veterans to take leadership roles in other veterans' organizations in order to form coalitions around union veterans' issues. Just like we have more power as a collective bargaining unit than as a single employee, the joining together of veterans and their families in one broad coalition will give us more influence on lawmakers.



Sign Up and Add Your Voice

All union members who are concerned about policies that affect our veterans are encouraged to sign up as a member of the UVC. You don't need to be a veteran, and it's totally free of charge. To sign up:

- ▶ Go to www.aflcio.org
- ▶ In the search window at the top of the page, type **union veterans council**
- ▶ From the search results, click on **Union Veterans 2008: Union Veterans Council**
- ▶ This is the UVC homepage. In the left-hand column, click on **Sign Up for Union Vets E-Mail Alerts**
- ▶ Complete the short form to sign up



Helmets to Hardhats Helping Ease the Transition

Each year, 250,000 to 300,000 men and women are discharged from the military. Helmets to Hardhats (H2H), is a free, non-profit program that connects veterans with construction careers. The program helps retired and transitioning military personnel make a successful transition back into civilian life by providing them an entry point to quality careers in the building and construction trades that provide family-supporting wages, medical benefits and a reliable pension plan.

The construction industry offers an annual salary higher than the overall national average and provides more than 80 unique apprenticeship programs. Veterans starting out in the construction industry are eligible to earn as they learn through the GI Montgomery Bill, which covers general living expenses during apprenticeship training.

Why Is It a Win-Win?

When veterans finish their military service, they face a tough economy and job market. They deserve opportunities that will provide them job stability and decent wages and benefits, and H2H strives to make that possible.

Labor unions and their signatory contractors also benefit greatly by utilizing this unique talent pool. Transitioning military veterans are educated, drug-free, physically fit, safety conscious and are willing to work hard until the job is done. Thousands of service members hold building and construction jobs in the military. They are natural fits for civilian building trades and tend to excel on the jobsite. H2H also provides tools for contractors who are looking for workers with specific skills.

Proven Placement

Despite the economy, last year 1,060 former service members got jobs through the Helmets to Hardhats program. Forty-nine of these members were registered as Wounded Warriors—individuals severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. H2H administers a Wounded Warrior program



that helps disabled American veterans secure rewarding jobs in construction.

The United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers signed twenty-two transitioning veterans through H2H last year—over three times as many as were placed in 2008. Forty-eight local unions are registered with the program. Our goal is to have every Roofers local union registered and actively involved with the program. For more information, visit www.helmetstohardhats.org

Veterans in the Workplace Local 26 Offers Veterans a Rewarding Career Path

Keith Vitkovich, Apprentice Instructor at Local 26, Hammond-Gary, IN, knows first-hand the benefits of hiring veterans in the union workplace. There are currently four veterans in the local's apprenticeship program. Vitkovich says the inclusion of military personnel is a priority at the Local. He believes that it is not only important to give veterans a chance at a great career, but they also make ideal program candidates.

"They came and applied to our apprenticeship program. One of our initiatives is to put vets to work. They met the minimum requirements and were accepted into the program," says Vitkovich. Brandon Reese, Jason Prairie, Keith Miller and James Johnson, all veterans, are standouts in the Local 26 apprenticeship program.

GI Bill Extends to Apprenticeship Programs

With the exception of Prairie, all are collecting GI Bill benefits from their service while they learn the roofing trade. The

Bill is known for covering tuition costs for veterans, but it also provides money for those who enter a federally recognized apprenticeship program. The amount provided under the GI Bill makes it possible for veterans to earn journeyman wages while working as an apprentice—one Local 26 apprentice receives about \$1000 per month in benefits if he works at least 120 hours a month.

The GI Bill is helping Brandon Reese supplement his apprentice pay until he returns to active duty. He joined the National Guard in 2002 and has been in Local 26 since 2009. "I joined the union to make a better life for myself, and to work for better pay, benefits and education," says Reese, who will deploy to Afghanistan in August. He also recognizes the similarities in the two: "Like the military, the apprenticeship program makes you work through the ranks and advances you when you're ready."

Military and the Roofers Union = The Perfect Fit

A job in construction requires the same talents as a military career. Jason Prairie picked up many positive attributes in his seven years in the U.S. Army, and he finds those same skills relevant to his experience as a 2nd-year apprentice at Local 26. "The military teaches, above all else, discipline and respect: the discipline to stick with something and not give up, and how to respect the people you work with, around and for."

The physical demands are similar as well. Keith Miller took time off from his Local 26 apprenticeship to serve in the Army National Guard. His time spent roofing kept him in shape before entering the Army, and during his stint he was trained on all types of heavy equipment. He's now back and about to graduate as a journeyman. He says the military

New H2H Spokesperson



Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman, national spokesperson for Helmets to Hardhats.

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman is the second African American in U.S. history to obtain rank of three-star general in the U.S. Marine Corps and has been recently named the national spokesperson for Helmets to Hardhats.

As spokesperson, LtGen Coleman will build awareness and support for the program by speaking with transitioning military personnel, government officials and construction industry representatives. He believes the construction industry and the U.S. Armed Forces are ideal partners. "Our men and women are physically fit, perform well in team environments, pay attention to detail and value safety protocols. But, most importantly," he says, "they can think creatively when confronted with obstacles that threaten the success of their mission."

With General Coleman on board, Helmets to Hardhats Executive Director Darrell L. Roberts says the program will receive increased recognition and support. "Few people have earned the respect and admiration that General Coleman has earned during his many years of meritorious service to our country." Having him on the team will "greatly assist us in our mission," says Roberts.



COVER STORY

taught him how to “take charge and move ahead in the real world.” James Johnson, who served six years in the U.S. Navy and is going into his 4th year in the apprentice program, says the military taught him “respect, discipline and the importance of finishing what you start.”

The transition from military to the Roofers Union (and vice versa) makes perfect sense. “We definitely see the benefits of hiring veterans. They are well-disciplined, very assertive and determined. They are willing to work as a team to get the job accomplished,” says Apprentice Instructor Vitkovich. Most of all, they deserve a shot at a career that will give back to them in the same way they have given part of their lives for our country.



Brandon Reese is about to enter his second year in Local 26's apprenticeship program, but will return to active military duty in Afghanistan this fall.



James Johnson takes his last test before graduating from the Local 26 apprenticeship program.



Jason Prairie says he learned discipline and respect during his six years in the Army.



Left to right, Local 26 apprentices James Johnson, Keith Miller and Jason Prairie all served in the military either before or during their apprenticeship training.