

ROOFERtoROOFER

by International President Kinsey M. Robinson

Helmets to Hardhats

A Path from Military Service to Union Membership

Many of you, like me, came to the roofing trade after being separated from military service. Since the founding of the fifteen building and construction trades unions, there has been a strong tradition of men and, in recent years, women taking up careers in one of the various crafts after proudly serving our country. In a reversal of that tradition, building tradesmen have always been willing to drop their tools and enlist in the service of their choice at a time of national emergency or to support the general welfare of the country.

Today we have over 250,000 men and women transitioning from the military annually. This number includes those who are finishing their first hitch, retirees, and personnel leaving on medical discharge. Aside from serving their country with distinction, they all have one thing in common – they are proven team players and dependable workers. These men and women have the skills that make them a good fit with the unionized roofing industry where we have a chronic shortage of skilled journeymen and a need for qualified applicants for our apprenticeship programs.

Over the past few years the Roofers Union, along with the other building trades unions and numerous employer associations, has partnered with Helmets to Hardhats. The Helmets to Hardhats program is a non-profit organization funded through the Department of Defense, administered by the Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment and Veterans Employment, and headquartered in Washington, DC. This program is leading the way in providing assistance to transitioning active duty military personnel, National Guardsmen, and Reservists in finding stable and secure careers in

the Building Trades.

The job placement services Helmets to Hardhats provides are at no cost to veterans and there are no costs incurred by qualified apprenticeship programs and union contractors who post their training and employment opportunities on the Helmets to Hardhats website www.helmetstohardhats.org.

Helmets to Hardhats has been extremely effective in reaching the veteran population. In 2007 the program registered 18,731 candidates interested in career opportunities in the trades. At a time when our Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs are in need of a plentiful pipeline of responsible talent to fill the ever pressing need for qualified craftsmen, Helmets to Hardhats fits the bill. Veterans are eligible for the program if they are at least 18 years of age, have an honorable discharge, have a high school diploma or equivalent, pass a drug test, and are physically fit to perform construction work. Helmets to Hardhats candidates are as serious about learning a trade as they were about defending our country. America's service men and women have proven themselves to be dedicated, hard-working, disciplined, punctual, ready to work and drug-free. What's more, they have high level security clearances and they perform under pressure.

Our patriotic young men and women have served our country – and in many cases risked their lives to do so. Now it is our turn to offer them an opportunity to learn the roofing trade and share in the great tradition of becoming a member of our union.

