

Smoothing the transition

Danette Mitchell, March 12, 2011

"When opportunity comes, we should grab it with both hands and run with it," observed an active-duty Air Force member stationed at Travis Air Force Base while attending "Operation Career: Military/Veteran Transition Assistance."

The event was held in San Francisco this month to help those still in the military (active or reserves), veterans and their spouses conduct effective job searches and translate their military careers into civilian terms. It was also an opportunity to learn about services available for veterans and their spouses.

There were almost as many attendees from the East Bay and Solano County as there were from the San Francisco area. The same was true at Operation Career's first event in November.

I have written before about Operation Career. It is a partnership between the Employment Development Department and PeopleThink, a San Francisco-based organization that focuses on career, leadership and team development.

One attendee, who will soon be discharged from Travis Air Force Base, said it was worth the trip to San Francisco for the workshops and that he would recommend them to other veterans. "It's an opportunity to get out of the military community and hear another perspective," he said. "PeopleThink is organized by civilians to help veterans. They know what it's going to be like working out here when we're no longer active military."

Other Solano County veterans and spouses who traveled to San Francisco, including representatives from the Solano County Office of Education, agreed that Operation Career should be part of the military's transition assistance program.

Anthony Flores, a veteran who assists PeopleThink believes that Operation Career differs from other programs for veterans, in part because it also helps spouses. Being a veteran himself, he is on hand to help attendees translate military jargon into civilian terms, to answer questions they may have about their DD-214 and to provide other pertinent information.

At the event, for instance, he shared a website -- www.togetherweserved.com -- where recently discharged veterans can locate those they served with but with whom they have lost contact.

The workshops are interactive and, in five modules, attendees learn from each other as well as from workshop facilitators. They also receive a free copy of "Get Real Guide to Your Career," by PeopleThink founder Karen Colligan.,

PeopleThink's goal is to provide three more workshops this year. With the help of corporate sponsors to underwrite costs, we could -- and should -- have an Operation Career event in Solano County. We should.

Yes, civilians need help with their job searches. However, we should also take care of our military families and their spouses. It is an honorable investment.

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