THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION AT HIRING OUR HEROES.

I am relatively new to the program, having joined the team in September 2013. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of serving next to these men and women as an enlisted Airman in the Indiana Air National Guard and later as an officer in the Navy JAG Corps. I am honored to now serve as the executive director of Hiring Our Heroes (HOH). The incredible foundation built by my predecessor, Lt. Col. Kevin Schmiegel (USMC, Ret.), and the unprecedented success of the program under his leadership have enabled HOH to do more than we ever thought possible.

Since our launch in March 2011, we have hosted nearly 750 hiring fairs and connected hundreds of thousands of veterans and military spouses with employers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

We have also made great progress with our Hiring 500,000 Heroes campaign with Capital One. In just over two and a half years, more than 2,000 companies have committed to hire more than 475,000 veterans and military spouses, and we expect to reach half a million commitments ahead of schedule.

Much of the progress documented in this report can be attributed to the strong relationships we have formed with public, private, and nonprofit partners. Our Veteran Employment Advisory Council (VEAC) and our Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council (MSEAC) have gone above and beyond to pave new roads in military employment, leading their respective industries by example.

While we can and should reflect proudly on our collective efforts, we cannot lose sight of the important work that lies ahead—this is especially true given the significant military transition that will occur over the next five years. Hand in hand with our partners, we move forward with confidence and determination.

Our work to get our nation's heroes hired has just begun.

ERIC EVERSOLE
Vice President, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Executive Director, Hiring Our Heroes
When HOH began in March 2011, our veterans and military spouses faced a bleak employment outlook. Post-9/11 veterans had an unemployment rate greater than 12%, nearly 50% higher than the national average. For veterans under age 25, the rate was closer to 30%, and military spouses faced an unemployment rate of 25%.

Much has improved over the last few years. According to a 2013 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans has dropped below 10%, while unemployment for veterans under age 25 is down nearly 10 points to 20%. Military spouses have also seen some improvement, although their unemployment rate still hovers at 25%.

The challenges, however, are far from over. Veterans and military spouses continue to face significant employment hurdles, especially among post-9/11 veterans. And with the expected downsizing of the military—the largest since the end of the Cold War—we can expect that more than one million veterans and military spouses will need our assistance in the coming years.

HOH works aggressively to provide that assistance to our heroes throughout the country. From our hiring fairs to our spouse networking receptions to our online services, we provide myriad services to support veterans and military spouses. Our formula for success is simple: bring together local communities through our nationwide network of private and public partners to affect change in those communities. The success reflected in this report is a result of collective efforts.
MORE THAN ONE MILLION VETERANS AND MILITARY SPOUSES WILL NEED OUR ASSISTANCE IN THE COMING YEARS.
Since March 2011, HOH has hosted nearly 750 hiring fairs throughout the United States. In other words, the program has hosted a hiring fair nearly every business day for the last three and a half years!

Turnout continues to be impressive. Overall, more than 200,000 veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses have attended our fairs, which have ranged in size from large to small. For example, the Capital One-sponsored hiring fair with the NBA’s Washington Wizards attracted 110 employers and 650 job seekers. Others like the ones in Springfield, Oregon, and Huntsville, Alabama, each connected 150 job seekers with 40 employers.

Significantly, our placement rates (i.e., the number of job seekers who find employment) remain best in class. Through June 2014, more than 24,000 veterans and military spouses found jobs as a direct result of our hiring fairs. Our placement rate of 12% continues to be three times the national average of 4%.

In September 2013, the Call of Duty Endowment (CODE) recognized HOH with CODE’s inaugural Seal of Distinction award, which highlights “nonprofit organizations that have proven to be the most effective and efficient at placing veterans into high-quality careers.” Our cost per hire (a mere $386 in fiscal year 2012) was a key component of our effectiveness and efficiency.

As we move forward, HOH is working to leverage local sports teams and celebrities to reach
deeper into veteran communities. We partnered with the Washington Wizards in March to host a daylong hiring event for veterans and military spouses, and more than 650 attended. We hosted a similar event at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in partnership with Hendrick Motorsports. Again, hundreds of veterans and their families attended.

HOH also launched a series of Veterans Jobs Summits in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, the Army, and the White House’s Joining Forces. These two-day events, often held on military installations, are designed around two goals: educate recruiters and community leaders on best practices in hiring and retaining military employees and help transitioning service members and military spouses prepare for civilian careers. Each summit ends with a HOH hiring fair to connect employers with talented veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses.

Our first Veterans Jobs Summit took place in February at Fort Bliss, Texas. The first day provided best practices for more than 150 businesses in the El Paso area. On the second day, we shifted our focus to transitioning service members who would soon be leaving Fort Bliss and to military spouses searching for work in the civilian workforce. More than 650 service members and spouses attended our employment workshops, and 1,000 attended a hiring fair with more than 100 local and national employers.

The second summit took place at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in April. More than 1,000 service members and military spouses gathered in the Welcome Home Hangar of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to hear remarks from First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden. Following those remarks, job seekers met with more than 100 employers from across the country.

HOH strives to provide best-in-class hiring events for military and veteran communities nationwide. We look for ways to meet the ever-changing needs of our service members and their families and help them find meaningful employment opportunities.
MILITARY SPOUSE EVENTS
Over the last two years, the HOH Military Spouse Program has grown rapidly and provides comprehensive services to military spouses across the country.

The core of this program is a two-day hiring experience designed specifically for military spouses. This experience begins with a networking reception on the evening before the hiring fair, followed by employment workshops and a hiring fair the next day. Both events are held on military installations in partnership with the local base leadership, senior military spouses, local chambers of commerce, and other nonprofit partners.

The networking receptions have been incredibly successful. Using a model similar to speed dating, tables are dispersed throughout a large room where hiring professionals network and provide career advice to military spouses. Every five minutes spouses are encouraged to switch tables and meet another hiring professional. This goes on for nearly an hour. Spouses with the most connections (counted through business cards collected) receive a prize through the generous support of La Quinta Inns and Suites.

So far, HOH has hosted 10 networking receptions exclusively for military spouses. More than 1,400 have attended throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. These receptions will continue to be an integral part of every military spouse hiring fair through the incredible support of our partners at USAA.

Following the reception, spouses can attend free employment workshops and a hiring fair the next day. The workshops provide practical advice and targeted guidance on how to land a job. Spouses put that advice, as well as their networking skills, to the test at the fairs. HOH hiring events are unique because of our local and national business partners. They understand the incredible value of military spouses—their high level of education and dedication, their ability to multitask, and their ability to accomplish the mission.

The success of these events is evident from the turnout and hiring data. Through June 2014, 2,556 spouses connected with 490 employers at 15 military spouse fairs.

This year we also created a spouse-exclusive LinkedIn group for all of the military spouses, military family organizations, and employers that have participated in our program—again through the generous support of USAA. The LinkedIn group consists of one overall HOH Military Spouse Program group with 1,600 members and nine subgroups that total more than 1,000 members. We plan to have 20 regional groups, affiliated with all our 2014 event locations by the end of the year.

One final note: In November 2013, HOH was humbled when its spouse team received a Certificate of Commendation signed by Gen. James Amos, Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. The Commendation is one of the highest non-medal awards a civilian organization can receive from the Marine Corps. It states, “Through their superior initiatives, uncompromising commitment to improving opportunities for our military spouses, and loyal devotion to our warriors and their families, the actions of this organization are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps.” We are honored to have received this award.

Bonnie Amos, former First Lady of the Marine Corps (center), hosted the Hiring Our Heroes military spouse team and members of the Military Spouse Employment Advisory Council for a working brunch at the Home of the Commandments in Washington, D.C. on November 13, 2013.
EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS
MORE THAN 9,000 VETERANS AND TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS HAVE BENEFITED FROM THESE WORKSHOPS SINCE EARLY 2012.

The skills and leadership opportunities that our nation’s military receive are second to none. Yet communicating these skills remains a significant challenge for many veterans and military spouses. For this reason, HOH provides employment workshops at every hiring event.

HOH provides veterans and military spouses with step-by-step guidelines and interactive exercises to prepare them for the job search. These workshops encourage participants to practice their interviewing skills and elevator pitches with fellow attendees. The sessions also include presentations on How to Write a Resume and How to Work a Job Fair. Through June 2014, 9,079 veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses took advantage of these workshops.

The workshops are available, in large part, owing to a generous grant and strong partnership with the University of Phoenix. Veterans employed by program supporter GE have also taken the lead, volunteering at dozens of events throughout the nation. Support for the workshops continues to grow with assistance from First Command, Masco Contractor Services, Accenture, and other partners.

In early 2014, we established a strategic agreement with Goodwill Industries International that provides training services and other job placement services in up to 100 cities. In addition, HOH offers one-on-one coaching, including resume review and mock interviews at each hiring fair and has provided this service to 3,616 veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses. Approximately 231 experts from the human resources and recruitment fields have volunteered an estimated 693 hours to provide job seekers with this service.

To ensure quality, we have also begun conducting pre- and post-workshop surveys to measure effectiveness. Initial feedback has been excellent. Overall, our trainers have received a rating of 4.7 out of 5.0 for the overall quality of the program. Moreover, 90% of the participants said that the workshop helped them find a job.
As we continue to host job fairs across the country, news stories continue to emerge about the tens of thousands of military members and families impacted by our program, the employers committed to finding the most qualified candidates our nation has to offer, and the tremendous partners that make it all possible. In 2013, Hiring Our Heroes was featured in the Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Huffington Post* and on NBC’s *TODAY Show* and *Nightly News* programs, CNBC, MSNBC, and FOX News.

HOH also works closely with regional and local news organizations across the country to share stories of talented veterans and military spouses connecting with savvy employers. Through more than a thousand media opportunities in 2013,
we reached Americans throughout the United States and shared the many resources our program provides.

Comcast-NBCUniversal has been an especially powerful force in raising awareness. Dozens of NBC affiliate stations from New York City to Helena, Montana, have promoted and provided coverage of our fairs. Last summer, Comcast-NBCUniversal donated $1.5 million worth of advertising to create and run a Hiring Our Heroes Public Service Announcement voiced by NBC News anchor Ann Curry, which aired across the media group's platforms.

More than 360,000 people visited the HOH website during the past year, generating nearly 1.3 million page views. Our social media reach is more than 330,000 followers strong, including more than 316,000 fans on Facebook.
HIRING
500,000
HEROES
In March 2012, Hiring Our Heroes and Capital One launched the Hiring 500,000 Heroes campaign—a national campaign to engage and encourage businesses to hire veterans and military spouses. Together, we set an impressive goal of 500,000 hiring commitments by the end of 2014.

The campaign has been an incredible success. In just 30 months, more than 1,700 businesses have stepped up to the plate and have committed to hire more than 448,000 veterans and military spouses. Of those commitments, more than 265,000 veterans and military spouses have already been hired. Through the first half of 2014, more than 280 businesses made 88,000 commitments to hire veterans and military spouses. That is an average of nearly 15,000 commitments per month.

Significantly, many commitments are coming from small and medium-size businesses. From our partnership with the International Franchise Association to our relationship with local chambers and their small business networks, more and more small businesses are answering the call to hire veterans and military spouses. In fact, nearly 72% of our commitments have come from businesses with fewer than 500 employees.

Employers that commit display a “we committed” websticker on their website and receive a monthly e-newsletter highlighting upcoming fairs and new opportunities to connect with job seekers.

**MORE THAN 1,700 BUSINESSES HAVE PLEDGED SINCE MARCH 2012**

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ONLINE RESOURCES
To expand our reach beyond bricks and mortar events, HOH has developed a host of virtual tools to assist veterans and military spouses as they seek meaningful employment. These tools also benefit employers by linking them directly to military talent. These online tools complement our hiring fairs and greatly expand our reach into communities throughout America.

**PERSONAL BRANDING RESUME ENGINE**

The Personal Branding Resume Engine, launched in March 2013 with the generous support of Toyota, tackles one of the biggest challenges facing our service members—how to fully capture and translate military experience and explain it in terms that civilian employers understand.

The Resume Engine focuses on exploring a veteran’s Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), but it goes well beyond that. It uses drop-down menus and provides tips to guide veterans through capturing and explaining the full range of their military experience. The resulting resume provides a more complete picture of each veteran’s service, including deployments, training, and awards.

Once completed, veterans can post their resume in our database, and businesses can search that database free of charge based on location, keywords, or specialized experience. Our database averages anywhere from 5,000 to 15,000 resumes depending on unemployment rates, seasonal factors, and the number of service members transitioning from the military.

Through the middle of 2014, more than 15,000 service members and veterans used the Resume Engine, and more than half of them made their resumes searchable to employers. In addition, more than 3,500 businesses conducted approximately 85,200 resume previews in the database. For more information about Resume Engine and the Personal Branding Initiative, visit resumeengine.org.

**CAREER SPARK**

Building on its success with Resume Engine, Toyota helped launch Career Spark in March 2014—the first and only personal branding tool designed exclusively for military spouses. After conducting extensive research, HOH learned that many military spouses discount their extensive educational backgrounds, their full range of work experience, and their volunteer experience when they apply for jobs—all of this despite the fact that military spouses often manage people and oversee budgets. Many spouses also struggle to explain gaps in their work history.

Like Resume Engine, Career Spark uses an intuitive platform to pinpoint and explain military spouses’ full range of experience. It looks beyond their basic work history and explores education, volunteer experience, and other transferrable skills. Career Spark enables spouses to create a skills-based resume highlighting their work skills, rather than gaps in their work history.

Career Spark also helps military spouses prepare for interviews. It provides them with tips on their elevator pitches, interviewing skills,
and professional attire. Like the Resume Engine, military spouses can post their resumes on our database, and employers can search that database free of charge.

In less than six months, the site experienced more than 50,000 unique visitors, and more than 1,000 spouses started or completed their resumes. Career Spark users can share their resumes with the more than 3,500 employers that have signed up to use the Resume Engine employer search feature. Learn more about Career Spark at mycareerspark.com.

EMENTOR

Veterans and military spouses often find themselves daunted by the transition to civilian careers because of limited professional networks, a lack of direct experience in particular jobs or industries, and strong cultural differences. These obstacles form the basis of our partnership with Toyota and AcademyWomen around our Veteran and Military Spouse eMentor programs.

eMentor is a customized, highly personal, online mentoring and networking program for veterans and military spouses that is delivering meaningful results for both employers and job seekers. Participating mentors provide guidance and support in career transition, career advancement, work-life balance, and other challenges faced by veterans and military families.

Since their launch in January 2013, the Veteran and Military Spouse eMentor Programs have grown significantly. More than 1,000 veterans and service members and 1,500 military spouses have signed up to participate in the programs and are being mentored by more than 400 mentors across the country.

We are seeing great results from the mentee/protégé relationships. Nearly 75% of all mentees rated their mentor as excellent or good and would recommend the program to other veterans and military spouses. In addition, more than 50% of all mentees said that they were better equipped to meet challenges in their professional lives. We are also seeing significant boosts in their confidence and morale. To learn more about eMentor, visit ementorprogram.org.

FAST TRACK

Making an informed decision about where to live when leaving the military is pivotal to a transitioning service member finding stable employment. But it does not come as a surprise to learn that the vast majority of service members choose to relocate to their home of record or to settle around their last duty station. These decisions tend to be made without purposeful consideration of the employment situation in those communities, often resulting in a misalignment between available employment opportunities and the concentration of veterans looking for work in those same communities.

This is why HOH partnered with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University to create Fast Track. This online resource maps the 100 fastest job-growing markets in America and determines the key industries driving that growth. The goal is to help veterans and transitioning service members identify cities and industries having the best prospects for meaningful employment.

In 2013, HOH launched two industry tracks—Entertainment/Media with Got Your 6 and Advanced Manufacturing with General Electric—that provide detailed overviews and advice on how to find jobs in those industries. The website has attracted more than 26,000 unique visitors. We also added the Trucking Track in partnership with Fastport in 2014. Fastport’s position as an industry leader in providing trucking companies with talented candidates will help thousands of service members find high-quality careers in transportation.

Fast Track is under renovation as we provide greater functionality to find and search for careers across the United States. We are also building out the Financial Services Track and the Insurance Track with Capital One’s and USAA’s support, respectively. View those tracks at hiringourheroes.org/fasttrack.
ALL VET STATES

Over the past few years, HOH has seen many state governments step up to the plate and develop programs to help attract military talent to live and work in their respective states. With that in mind, we created the All Vet States initiative in March 2013 to showcase states that are working to create economic opportunities for veterans and military spouses and to highlight the resources available to transitioning military families.

Participating states are featured on our website and branded as an All Vet State. Each participating state receives its own page dedicated to identifying the state resources and services available to veterans and military families. This way a state can help influence the transitioning service member’s decision-making process in bringing their skill sets and revenue to that state.

Seven states have become All Vet States—Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin—and the initiative has been touted by Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder. HOH continues to engage regularly with governors’ offices as we grow the list. Our goals are simple—create friendly competition among the states and get all 50 to become All Vet States. Learn more about this initiative at allvetstates.com.

HOH MOBILE APP

In September 2013, HOH and Verizon launched the Hiring Our Heroes mobile app, a portable one-stop shop developed to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses search for employment. The app gathers all of HOH’s resources in one easy-to-use tool, enabling military members and their families to look for jobs and access free employment resources on virtually all mobile devices. Download your free app today.
SPECIAL PROGRAMS
Collaboration is central to our success. From public- and private-sector partners to our network of state and local chambers, HOH has leveraged the power of collaboration to assist veterans and military spouses as they search for meaningful employment. The partnerships have produced an online hiring guide, a virtual portal for veterans, multiagency veteran employment summits, and other programs.

**VA Hiring Guide**

In November 2013, HOH teamed up with the Department of Veterans Affairs to write and produce the first-ever *Guide to Hiring Veterans*. This e-book gathers numerous resources and business incentives into one free and accessible place to help employers of every size and industry establish stronger veteran and military spouse hiring campaigns.

Information in the guide includes online job banks and military skills translators, VA benefits, Hiring Our Heroes job fairs, American Job Centers, Veterans Gold Card, and Official Wounded Warrior programs. Share the resource with your colleagues and local businesses to help spread the word. The guide is available at ebenefits.va.gov.

**Next Steps for Vets**

HOH has built a strong partnership with NBC News that has led to extensive coverage of Hiring Our Heroes across Comcast-NBCUniversal platforms. We deepened this relationship by working together on NBC’s launch of the online portal Next Steps for Vets in November 2013. The site provides tools and resources for veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses seeking employment and education opportunities.

Next Steps for Vets promotes upcoming Hiring Our Heroes fairs and features many of our online programs, including the Personal Branding Resume Engine, Career Spark, and eMentor. The portal also includes resources from many of our leading partners in the industry, such as Blue Star Families and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University. Access the site at nextstepsforvets.com.

**Rock Tour Veteran Roadie**

As part of our Hiring 500,000 Heroes campaign with Capital One, we teamed up with KISS and summer tour partner Def Leppard to help them hire two veterans as roadies. This was the second time we partnered with KISS for a nationwide veteran roadie search. Two years ago, Army veteran and longtime KISS fan Paul Jordan was chosen to join a tour after a review of 1,900 applications sent in from coast to coast.

On April 11, 2014, the bands announced this year’s contest live on the NBC *TODAY Show* in New York. In June, Bill Jones, a retired CH-47 Chinook pilot, and Kayla Kelly, a former Marine Corps Radio Operator, were selected live on stage at the first stop of the 42-city tour.

**Chamber of Valor**

We could never do the work we do without the partnership of a vast network of grassroots organizations throughout the country. The Chamber of Valor Program is one way we acknowledge the enormous contributions of state and local chambers, industry associations, and business development organizations that support HOH’s mission: to create a movement across America to help veterans and military spouses find employment in the communities where military members and families return every day.

Chamber of Valor honorees are awarded at the one-, two-, and three-star levels. Honorees receive a websticker recognizing their achievement, a certificate of appreciation, a letter of acknowledgment, and a digital toolkit to promote the award to members, the media, and the public.

**Chamber of Valor Honorees as of June 2014**

- Boise Metro Chamber — 3 star
- Christian County Chamber — 3 star
- Dearborn Area Chamber — 3 star
- Greater El Paso Chamber — 3 star
- Greater Springfield Chamber — 3 star
- Greater Tampa Chamber — 3 star
- Manhattan Chamber — 3 star
- Montgomery County Chamber Community Foundation — 2 star
- Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber — 3 star
LOOKING AHEAD
As we move forward, we will continue our efforts in local communities throughout the United States. Hiring Our Heroes will work with its partners at the departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Labor to reach service members and their spouses earlier in the transition process. Through the tremendous support of the more than 40 members of our Veteran and Military Spouse Employment Advisory councils, we will continue to develop and deliver innovative online solutions to veterans and military spouses and ensure that businesses have the resources and the know-how to hire them.