



THE SECOND IN OUR SERIES FOCUSING ON ISSUES FACING LOCAL VETERANS

# VETERANS

## AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

STORY: PAT JOCELYN

One of two veterans will likely face a period of unemployment and the problem is escalating at a disturbing rate. During the next five years, more than 200,000 military men and women will transition into civilian life—*each year*. That translates to overburdening a system already broken and unable to provide the necessary assistance to veterans striving to reenter civilian workplaces.

The statistics are alarming. According to a Joint Chiefs of Staff report from the Office of the Chairman (Sept. 2014), in 2013 veterans, ages 18-24, averaged an unemployment rate of 21.4 percent. In July 2014, the statistics raised to

32.1 percent. The *civilian* unemployment rate in that same age group was much lower—14.3 percent in 2013 and 12.7 percent in 2014.

David Booth is CEO and founder of Combat Veterans to Careers, a local nonprofit gaining national attention as a driving force that's helping bridge disconnects between military and civilian life. He met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff office with the intent of working with the government and other nonprofit organizations to bridge this gap, and ultimately provide a well-coordinated and uncomplicated approach each

veteran can easily follow.

One of those uncomplicated approaches is used at Combat Veterans to Careers. They developed an established process that assists and guides veterans transitioning into civilian life. It's help that is badly needed.

"A veteran goes to our website ([www.combatveteranstocareers.org](http://www.combatveteranstocareers.org)), verifies he is a vet, fills out a form, and contacts us," David explains. "We also ask for a resume so we have an idea of what kind of career they want to get involved in."

This is just one of many tools available for veterans, but they need to know about them to use them. "We need to find ways to get information to our veterans," David says. "That's what I'm trying to do. If I can't help them, I will find somebody that can."

Ironically, those same veterans who are unable to find jobs are an untapped resource that would benefit most businesses—but they don't know about each other. Toss into the mix numerous nonprofits that



nonprofit organizations and businesses that support veterans. Individually, one organization may be able to help a vet in one area, but collectively the coalition it belongs to can provide 360 degrees of support and opportunities.

David is also in the process of developing a veterans' resource web page. "I already have 200 organizations listed for people to use," David says. "They're

**"WE'VE HELPED 258 FAMILIES TRANSITION [TO CIVILIAN LIFE] IN 2015. BUT WE HAVE ABOUT 80 ON THE WAITING LIST THAT I JUST DON'T HAVE THE FUNDING OR RESOURCES FOR. I'M CRYING FOR HELP. TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES, THAT'S WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR."**

—DAVID BOOTH  
COMBAT VETERAN AND CEO/FOUNDER  
OF COMBAT VETERANS TO CAREERS

But veterans aren't expected to just write a resume. They're given a powerful online tool ([www.hireourheroes.org/veterans/build-a-resume/](http://www.hireourheroes.org/veterans/build-a-resume/)) that walks them through the resume-building process.

"[Hire our Heroes] took every single military job and translated it into civilian terminology," David continues. "Every job performed in each branch of service is covered. Then the veteran can add personalized skills. After the vets fill it out, they sit down with a volunteer and a plan is developed based on their individual needs."

support veterans in their job search but are having difficulty getting the word out to the vets, and it creates a chain reaction of confusion.

Another example of a service few veterans are aware of is any Staples store will print 50 copies of a resume and business cards at no charge.

With the objective of providing a clearinghouse of information and services for vets, David founded another 501(c)(3) (nonprofit—pending) called Coalition for Florida Veterans. Its membership consists of

in alphabetical order and have their name, mission, services, and contact information."

Other initiatives include veteran workshops and an online streaming radio show called Veterans Resource Radio. Vets can go to [www.combatveteranstocareers.org](http://www.combatveteranstocareers.org) for archived copies of radio shows and information about workshops.

"It can't be done alone," David says. "It takes just a little bit from a lot of people—time, talent and treasures—that's what we're looking for."