

Veterans' Hiring Events Coupled with Family Weekend Activities

HELPING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES DISCOVER A NEW HOME

Military personnel have rich work experiences that result in highly desirable technical and soft skills. As veterans transition from active duty to civilian life, North Carolina is interested in retaining the transitioning talent base in order to benefit the local economy. At the same time, veterans who are transitioning to civilian life are often seeking second careers in a place they and their families can call "home." With over 165,000 active duty military within a 250-mile drive, the city of Hickory categorizes itself as an ideal place for veterans to relocate, work, and raise their families.

WELCOME HOME,
HICKORY METRO

welcome-hky-metro.org



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Strategy to proactively recruit veterans and their families to the Hickory Metro area
- Offers personalized job matching for veterans and spouses with Hickory employers
- Provides a fair that connects veterans and spouses with local resources
- Facilitates optional family excursions that highlight what it is like to live in Hickory

Data demonstrate that a growing portion of transitioning veterans will be younger than 30 and have young families. Additionally, past surveys have found that many veterans would remain in North Carolina if they had a job opportunity. Driven by this data, Welcome Home, Hickory Metro was formed.

Welcome Home, Hickory Metro is a unique weekend event designed to draw transitioning, underemployed or unemployed veterans and their families from all over North Carolina to the Hickory area. Branded as an opportunity to find a purposeful career and enjoy a weekend getaway, twice a year this initiative pairs hiring events for veterans and their spouses with fun weekend excursions for family members to discover the Hickory community. At the hiring events, veterans and spouses are pre-matched with individual job interviews with local employers based on their skills and expertise. Resource fairs are also held in the same location as the hiring events to allow

veterans and spouses to connect to local resources that can help ease their transition to the Hickory area, such as non-profits and schools. Finally, the optional excursions provide family members with the opportunity to visit local attractions such as breweries, sports arenas, museums, and lakes.

Veterans and their families must register to attend Welcome Home, Hickory Metro, and the organizers have space for the first 50 registrants. To encourage participation, Welcome Home, Hickory Metro covers participants' weekend lodging, meals, and transportation. Additionally, since many participants travel to Hickory, the initiative also provides them with a \$50 gas card to help offset their travel costs. Transitioning, underemployed, or unemployed veterans who are unable to attend the two scheduled events during the year are invited to register for individual career search services on the Welcome Home, Hickory Metro website.

PARTNERSHIPS

There are twelve primary partners in the initiative: Catawba County Chamber of Commerce, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation, North Carolina For Military Employment, USO of North Carolina, NCWorks, Veterans Bridge Home, Unifour Veterans Helping Veterans, Catawba Valley Society of Human Resource Management, Patriots Path, Catawba Valley Marine Corps League Detachment 1163, North Carolina Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve, and TerraTal – The Global Talent Exchange.



PROGRAM FUNDING

Welcome Home, Hickory Metro began as an outcry from local employers who needed to attract workers with technical and soft skills. Such employers are heavily invested in the success of Welcome Home, Hickory Metro. Local companies pay to participate in the hiring event, and in doing so, they sponsor the weekends, which cost approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 each.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The inaugural Welcome Home, Hickory Metro event was held in September 2017, and organizers continue to host two events each year, one in the spring and another in the fall. As of September 2018, the program outcomes include:

- Hosted 61 families, which totals over 150 people
- Conducted 163 total interviews with veterans and spouses, including first and second round interviews
- Extended nine job offers
- Relocated six families to Catawba County, with several others in the pipeline to relocate

Data suggests that each new family contributes \$32,959 to Catawba County.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Brought to you by the NCWorks Commission, the Spotlight on Local Workforce Innovations series showcases local innovations in collaborative, employer-led workforce development partnerships across our state. The series will highlight promising practices that can be replicated across North Carolina.

The NCWorks Commission is the state's Workforce Development Board. Led by a private sector chair, the 33-member, Governor-appointed commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders. The commission's mission is to ensure North Carolina has an innovative, effective workforce development system that meets the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.