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**COLLEGE CREDIT
FOR HEROES**

Phase II: Update



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On the Cover: College Credit for Heroes Phase II partner Texas State Technical College Harlingen developed an accelerated degree program in wind engineering technology for student military veterans. *Photo courtesy of Jason Johnston, Texas State Technical College Harlingen*

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Regional meetings promote awareness of local workforce needs and accomplishments

By Chairman Andres Alcantar



The Texas economy is strong and growing. Over the past year, more than 395,000 jobs* were added in our state with all industry sectors adding jobs. These are encouraging indicators and we are eager to carry this momentum into the coming year.

The Texas Workforce Commission continues to work with our partners to deploy regional and responsive solutions to the workforce demands tied to this growth. This past spring we toured the state and held regional strategic planning meetings with our workforce partners. We learned about high quality local efforts to form partnerships with education and economic development entities. We also discussed local approaches to providing quality childcare for military families, career awareness opportunities for students and industry-aligned solutions. We made investments to replicate some of these efforts.

We also held regional meetings with the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to assess

regional workforce needs and opportunities, while working to promote initiatives that boost student awareness of occupational requirements and future career pathways. We are working together to advance Texas' pioneering efforts in dual-credit and Early College High School programs that allow students to overlap their educational requirements so that they can simultaneously earn a high school diploma, an industry-recognized certification, and college credit.

None of the initiatives, efforts and successes we learned about would have been possible without the tremendous dedication of our local Workforce Solutions partners—especially the volunteer board members who provide strong, effective leadership for

the workforce system throughout the state. I look forward to the future innovations our local board volunteers will continue to offer in support of our expanding Texas economy.

All of the input gathered at our regional meetings improves our understanding of the economies of each region and leaves us optimistic about the future and the continued effectiveness of Texas Workforce Solutions. We will continue to work closely with all of our state and local partners to craft an agenda that will bolster the state's workforce and economy. I appreciate all of the hard work of our local boards and agency staff as we deliver first class workforce services to the state. Thank you and keep up the fine work. ■

Andres Alcantar | Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public

* From August 2013 to August 2014 Texas added 395,200 seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs.



COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES

Phase II: Update

By Laura Ybarra

The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) College Credit for Heroes initiative wrapped up its second phase this summer, which expanded the program to more regions of the state and developed accelerated curricula in career fields such as information technology, fire technology, advanced manufacturing, logistics, wind engineering, and oil field technology. Launched in 2011, the initiative develops streamlined degree paths and workforce certifications in order to expedite military veterans' transition to the Texas workforce.

Richard Hughes, a former petty officer second class in the U.S. Navy, worked as a nuclear electrician's mate during his military career, which provided him with many skills required by the high-demand information technology industry. Hughes is currently enrolled at Austin Community College (ACC), pursuing an associate degree in automation, robotics and control technology as part of the College Credit for Heroes initiative.

"When I originally applied to ACC before the College Credit for Heroes program started, I only earned four or five credit hours for my military training," Hughes said. "After the College Credit for Heroes program started, ACC re-evaluated my transcript and I actually earned 24 credit hours, which saved me a lot of time and money while earning my degree."

As part of the College Credit for Heroes initiative's second phase, ACC staff reviewed approximately 4,500 military courses and compared them to 29 courses offered at ACC in identified electronics and advanced technology degree programs. Faculty then developed standard equivalency tables to award college credit for military coursework earned by those who served



Student veterans at Texas State Technical College Harlingen use services at the new campus veteran's center created by College Credit for Heroes Phase II grant funds. The center provides counseling, advising, tutoring, financial aid and other services to student veterans. Photo courtesy of Jason Johnston, Texas State Technical College Harlingen

in military occupation specialties related to electronics and advanced technology programs.

"I am already employed in the robotics field, but because I didn't have a degree, my advancement opportunities were limited," Hughes said. "By helping me to earn my degree more quickly, College Credit for Heroes will also help me achieve career growth at a faster rate."

ACC reviewed and evaluated more than 250 veterans' military transcripts, and identified 50 veterans who met the eligibility criteria. So far eight veterans have enrolled in the program and saved an average of two full-time academic semesters and \$1,900 in

tuition and fees through the program.

Texas State Technical College Harlingen (TSTC Harlingen) developed and implemented an accelerated certification and degree program in wind engineering technology as part of College Credit for Heroes Phase II.

"The program streamlined courses and created technical capitalization testing so the veterans could test out of courses and be awarded credit if they already had required safety certifications," said Steve Guevara, the director of TSTC Harlingen's student veteran center. "So far, 13 veterans have enrolled in the program and some have earned up to six credit hours and have saved



John Fabian, an Austin Community College student and former corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, works in his electromechanical systems class. ACC developed accelerated degree programs for student veterans majoring in electronics and advanced technology subjects as part of the College Credit for Heroes Phase II initiative. Photo by Amy Kincheloe

up to \$429 in tuition.”

TSTC Harlingen also created an additional scholarship fund for all student veterans through the College Credit for Heroes initiative and has awarded 73 veterans scholarships for an average of \$884 per veteran.

“TSTC Harlingen established a student veteran center on campus to evaluate prior training and experience to maximize the number of credits awarded to all veterans, not just those enrolled in the wind engineering technology program,” said Guevara. “So far the center has evaluated more than 300 student veterans. We offer other advising and counseling services as well.”

Dustin Cain, a former specialist in the U.S. Army, served as a field artillery automated tactical data system specialist before separating from the military last year. Cain recently earned an accelerated associate degree of applied science in fire technology through Tarrant County Community College’s (TCCC) College Credit for Heroes program in August, and will also earn his emergency medical technician (EMT)

certification later this year.

“Becoming a fire fighter was a huge dream of mine,” Cain said. “It’s one of the few professions where you see people on the worst day of their lives, but they know that their day is about to get better because you are there.”

Cain was one of 23 students enrolled in TCCC’s first fire technology graduation class specifically for military veterans. The program reduced the time it takes for veterans to become qualified fire fighters and EMTs from seven full-time semesters to three, saving them up to \$2,640 in tuition and fees.

“College Credit for Heroes has really fast-tracked

us, helping us earn our degrees and find jobs much faster than we would have otherwise,” Cain said.

The programs available at ACC, TSTC and TCCC are just two examples of the many opportunities that exist through the College Credit for Heroes initiative. For more information, visit www.texasworkforce.org/ccfh. ■

Military veterans and Tarrant County Community College students Nathaniel Cox, Matthew Davila, Vance Doerr and Melissa Garrett become firefighters as part of the College Credit for Heroes initiative. Photo courtesy of Tarrant County Community College



TWC Services for Veterans

By Laura Ybarra

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) provides priority service to military veterans for all workforce services and assisted more than 132,437 veterans throughout the Texas Workforce System in fiscal year 2013. TWC sponsors several programs and initiatives aimed at helping returning military veterans find employment opportunities in the civilian world, including the Texas Veterans Leadership Program, State of Texas Soldier Employment Initiative, Skills for Veterans and the Hiring Red, White and You! statewide hiring events.

TWC also has several initiatives for veterans currently in development.

Veteran and Industry Partnership

Established with \$4.3 million in Texas' Skills Development Fund training dollars, the Veteran and Industry Partnership initiative will address two great needs in Texas: the need for jobs for veterans and the growing demand for skilled workers in the petrochemical manufacturing, advanced manufacturing and information technology industries.

The availability of veterans who have the discipline, work ethic and capacity to learn new skills quickly, presents a favorable environment to respond to industry needs, while enhancing the professional skills of veterans, providing further job opportunities in this high-demand, high-wage industry. Funds will be provided to community colleges who will partner with industry associations and local Workforce Solutions offices to identify high-demand occupations and provide training to veterans to prepare them for those jobs.

Apprenticeship Program for Veterans

TWC recently approved \$500,000 of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding for the Apprenticeship Program for Veterans. This initiative will be focused on developing partnerships that offer veterans the opportunity to quickly enter into registered apprenticeship programs and be trained through accelerated programs in high-wage, high-demand occupations.

Texas Wide Open for Veterans

Using \$250,000 in WIA funds, TWC is currently collaborating with the Department

of Information Resources and the Texas Veterans Commission to develop a website to highlight available opportunities for veterans and their families who are considering remaining in or moving to Texas upon separating from the military. This initiative, referred to as "Texas Wide Open for Veterans," will launch later this year to promote the state's economic, educational and employment opportunities available to veterans.

College Credit for Heroes Phase III

College Credit for Heroes was initiated in 2011 and has expanded over two phases to include colleges and programs across the state. Using \$1 million in WIA funds, College Credit for Heroes' third phase expands the initiative by allowing college partners to create accelerated curricula in new fields or replicate programs previously developed in new locations. Phase III also supports partnerships with industry leaders to create jobs for veterans and support occupational internships.

For more information and a full list of veterans workforce services, visit www.texasworkforce.org/veterans. ■

Hiring Red, White & You! Statewide Hiring Fair

SAVE THE DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 2014

Join the Texas Workforce Commission and our 28 Workforce Solutions partners for the **Hiring Red, White & You!** statewide hiring fair!

The fair is designed to connect Texas veterans and their spouses with area employers looking for qualified candidates for a variety of positions who can bring valuable experience and discipline to the workplace.



Texas Medical Center

Hosted by the Texas Workforce Commission | www.texasworkforce.org/hrwy

Gulf Coast students learn about “middle skills” occupations

By Josh Shideler

Special Contributor
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast

Providing high school students with labor market information and educating them about regional in-demand jobs is a relatively simple undertaking. Doing so in a fun and engaging way, while motivating students to continue on an educational pathway that leads to high-skill, high-growth careers, is a bit more complicated.

This summer, Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast (Gulf Coast), in collaboration with JPMorgan Chase & Co., Project GRAD, and Lone Star College, provided selected rising juniors and seniors from the Houston and Aldine independent school districts with the opportunity to engage in project-based learning in a college setting. The two-week 2014 Chase Middle Skills Institute presented information on entry-level jobs in Houston’s budding energy sector and workplace skills for financing a post-secondary education.

The term “middle skills” refers to occupations like machinists, welders, pipefitters and roustabouts, which require more education than a high school diploma,

but less than a four-year college degree.

“There are opportunities in abundance for students considering middle skills occupations,” said Gulf Coast Executive Director Mike Temple. “By introducing them to these occupations early, and providing information about how they might approach and finance post-secondary schooling, we’re working to build an educated and trained workforce for the region.”

The Institute educated students about realistic options they have at their doorstep—options that not only introduce them to a stable career, but also develop and strengthen the Houston-Galveston workforce and economy.

Students were given time to role play each day through hands-on welding, tooling and machine programming experience and were also coached in employability skills, even getting a chance to practice job interviewing skills in front of a live panel of human resource representatives.

“I call this institute career awareness on steroids,” said Carolyn Watson, the relationship manager of global philanthropy at JPMorgan Chase & Co. “Awareness is

typically a one day job fair, but this was a very targeted, intentional approach.”

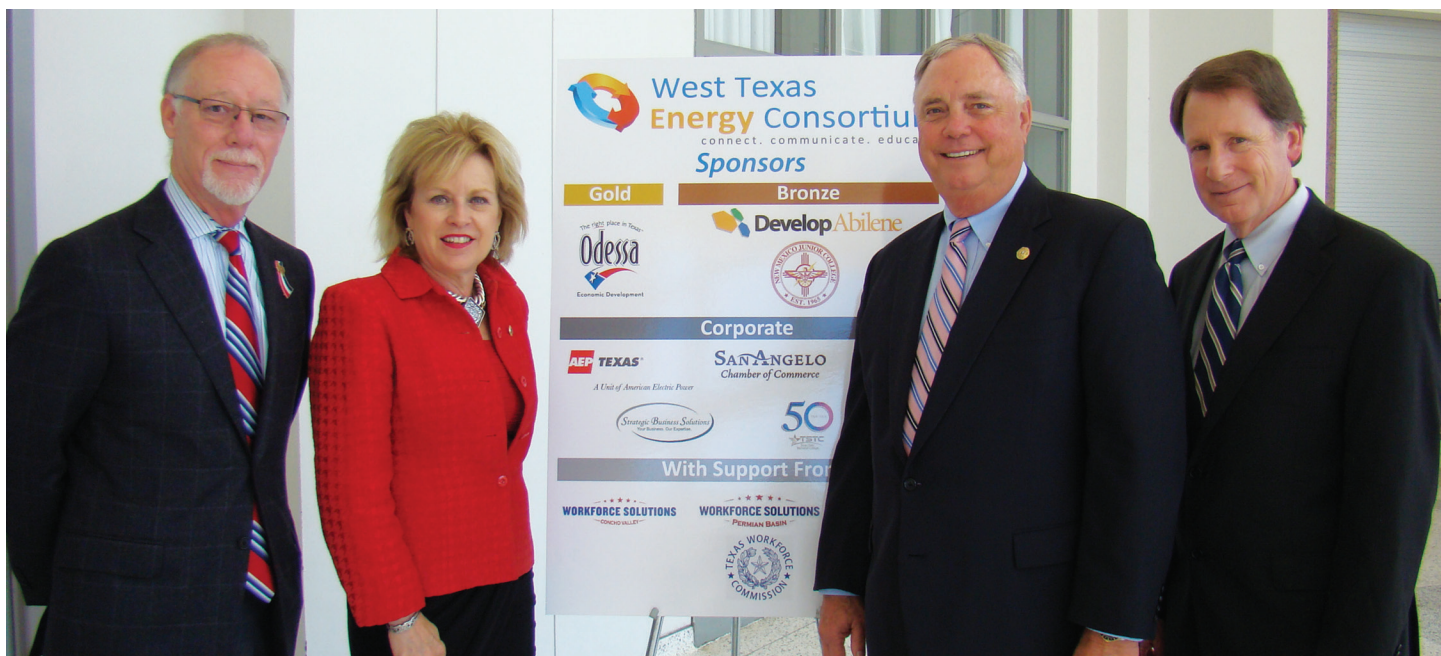
Eaton, a global technology leader in power management, was one of the employers involved in the Institute. Representatives discussed the company’s position in the industry and what a global manufacturer is looking for in employees.

“We traditionally work with students that have already chosen their careers and are working on increasing their core competency,” said Allan Clark, Eaton’s global technical marketing and training manager. “This institute gets to the students before they make a decision on a career path. Students learn where employment opportunities are heading and where they should align themselves.”

After the pilot year, each organization learned what was successful and where improvements can be made in the future. All of the partners plan to return next summer to introduce the subsequent round of students to regional high-skill, high-growth careers, the workplace, technical skills needed to get a job and options for financing an essential post-secondary education. ■



As part of the Middle Skills Institute summer curriculum, students learned the art of welding using the virtual reality welding technology at Lone Star College. Success in this activity is a requirement for all welding students in training. Photo courtesy of Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions



State Representative Jim Keffer, State Representative Susan King, State Representative Drew Darby, and Texas Tech University System Chancellor/former State Senator Robert Duncan attend the West Texas Energy Consortium’s Annual Conference in June. Photo Courtesy of the West Texas Energy Consortium

West Texas Energy Consortium meets the needs of area employers

By Macy D. Hurwitz

The West Texas Energy Consortium (WTxEC) was formed in 2013 to help entities in the Cline Shale play area collaborate to meet employers’ needs in the booming energy industry. WTxEC covers a 49-county region and allows industry, economic development, education, business, elected officials, workforce, non-profits and community leaders to network, collaborate, learn and explore solutions together to address common challenges.

Since the consortium’s inaugural meeting in May 2013, institutions of higher education and local school districts have begun the work that will help students in West Texas find work in the oil and gas industry.

“A key goal of ours is to help address workforce training and development issues identified by the energy sector in the increasingly active West Texas region,” said Victor G. Carrillo, WTxEC chairman. “Our Education and Workforce Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Ian Roark and Dr. Reece Blincoe, has made significant progress toward the goal of developing

regionally aligned, industry-recognized training programs in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand fields by linking eight West Texas community and technical colleges.

Dr. Ian Roark, executive dean of career, technical and workforce education at Odessa College, said that historically community college districts have not collaborated across service area lines, but the consortium has changed that. Odessa College and the other seven community college districts that are members of the consortium—Cisco College, Howard Colleges in San Angelo and Big Spring, Ranger College, Texas State Technical College, Western Texas College and Midland College—unanimously approved a regional plan in March, Roark said.

“This was a huge first step,” Roark said. “It is more important to collaborate and build region-wide systems for workforce development in oil and gas, because it’s the primary industry in this region than to operate the way we have in the past.”

Roark said they are working together to find solutions because students cross the boundaries regularly and they should be able to continue their education without being

derailed by changing districts. He hopes that he and the other partners will be able to implement the regional plan sooner rather than later in order to better serve those students.

The consortium has also engaged with partners at the K-12 level to help train local workers for high-paying jobs. Dr. Reece Blincoe, superintendent for Brownwood Independent School District (BISD), said his district and others are working with area colleges, such as Ranger College, to establish dual-credit programs. One such program is BISD’s welding program that gives students the opportunity to work with a welder from Loadcraft, a major employer in the area, once a week. Both senior students who participated in the project last year were offered jobs.

“We have two or three different welding operations here that are making the devices that hold the sand in the fracking industry,” said Blincoe. “The welding instructor said these kids are anxious to learn. They want those jobs.”

WTxEC’s members continue to work together to find ways to serve their region.

“We are proud of their efforts and look forward to other new and innovative ways to address key workforce needs in West Texas,” said Carrillo. ■

Senior Community Service Employment Program helps older workers gain new skills

By Amy Kincheloe

Learning a new skill and finding employment is a challenge at any age, but for older workers it can be especially difficult. Thanks to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) more mature workers are finding the training, encouragement and confidence to be a part of today's workforce.

SCSEP provides training and employment services to low-income job seekers aged 55 and older to assist them in securing unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors. Program participants earn while they learn, gaining competitive job skills and refining existing skills through paid, part-time, on-the-job training assignments at nonprofit organizations and government agencies. During training, participants earn minimum wage and provide valuable community services.

In June, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded grants totaling more than \$3.2 million to 14 organizations nationwide, including the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), to improve services to low-income older workers through SCSEP.

TWC received a \$301,397 additional grant to help boost its new Healthcare Employment and Training Initiative. TWC contracts with Experience Works to operate SCSEP employment and training programs in 146 counties throughout Texas.

Experience Works Texas Director Wes Cowan said the grant will provide healthcare training for 65 existing SCSEP participants, 30 of whom started the program at the end of September in the north east and north central part of the state.

"This is a one-year grant and we expect to have 65 participants enrolled in the program by June 13, 2015," Cowan said. "Fifty-five of those will earn a certificate of completion through a training program, and the majority will be able to secure a job as a result of the healthcare training they received."

Cowan said the initiative's goal is to have participants making at least \$9 an hour for full-time work by completion of their training.

"[Healthcare] is an in-demand field," Cowan said. "We've targeted training for nurse's aides, home healthcare providers, phlebotomists, and medical records and transcript processors, among others. This gives another 65 older individuals the chance to learn a new skill."

Cowan said the grant will also be used to augment existing services to SCSEP participants – many of whom train to work in reception, food service, libraries, schools and administration.

"Thousands of Texans have gone through the SCSEP program," Cowan said. "It has enriched their lives and increased their standard of living."

Diane Ward couldn't agree more.

After losing her job in 2012 and unsuccessfully trying to find another one in the small town of Brackettville, 122 miles west of San Antonio, Ward was becoming frustrated.

"There weren't that many jobs in Kinney County," Ward said. "It's difficult to get a job in a small town – the competition is already tight because there aren't that many to go around. After being continually turned down for available positions you start to wonder, 'Did they not pick me because of my age or the way I look?'"

Thanks to a friend, Ward heard about SCSEP, and entered the program in January 2013. She began training with Experience Works by helping other

participants in Maverick County learn to use a computer and teaching them how to log on to the Job Ready Career Development System, which helps identify job interests and work skills in order to match participants with the best possible job in their community.

After six months in training, Ward applied for and received an office administrative assistant position in the state Experience Works office in Waco. In July 2014, she was promoted to a data quality specialist where she helps verify the accuracy of SCSEP enrollment paperwork and then keys it into the Experience Works and DOL databases.

"SCSEP is a wonderful program that helps build self-confidence and helps you encourage others that they can do it too," Ward said. "It gives you the opportunity to meet people and gives you the confidence that you are capable of working in today's workplace environment." ■



Experience Works Texas Director Wes Cowan reviews SCSEP enrollment paperwork with Diane Ward, an Experience Works data quality specialist. Ward began her training with Experience Works and was hired by the agency six months later. Photo by Lilian Signey-Hall, Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas



TWC Executive Director Larry E. Temple was recognized for exemplary leadership skills and commitment in advocating for workforce education literacy for Texas residents when he was awarded the Bob Bullock Award at the Texas Digital Government Summit, which is presented by the publication, *Government Technology*. Photo Courtesy of *Government Technology*

TWC Executive Director Receives Bob Bullock Award from *Government Technology*

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Executive Director Larry E. Temple was recognized for exemplary leadership skills and commitment in advocating for workforce education literacy for Texas residents when he was awarded the Bob Bullock Award at the Texas Digital Government Summit, which is presented by the publication *Government Technology*. The Bob Bullock Award is given to a state executive or elected official each year in recognition of outstanding leadership and a career that exemplifies dedication to serving and improving the lives of Texas citizens.

“We are honored to present the 2014 Bob Bullock Award to Mr. Temple for his tireless efforts to improve government operations and better serve the citizens of Texas,” said Alan Cox, senior vice president of *Government Technology*. “His leadership and financial stewardship are evident by the successes of the commission and thriving Texas workforce.”

The publication touted Temple’s

track record for encouraging a culture of high-level customer service and fiscal responsibility in his decade-long tenure at TWC. Temple also received the President’s Award from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies in 2013. The summit, held in Austin on June 17, allowed government leaders to share best practices in order to advance the goals of their organizations.



Texas Workforce Commission Chairman Andres Alcantar attended the Workforce Solutions Cameron Mobile Resource Lab ribbon-cutting ceremony in Brownsville on Aug. 6, 2014. Photo courtesy of *Workforce Solutions Cameron*

Workforce Solutions Cameron Unveils New Mobile Resource Lab

Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) launched its new Mobile Resource Lab (MRL) in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Brownsville on Aug. 6, 2014. The new MRL replaces one that was retired on May 31, 2014, and served more than 1,900 customers in 15 different communities and 40 individual sites around Cameron County in 2013. The MRL also provides services for local independent school districts, job fairs, veterans and other community needs.

The MRL provides job seekers with a way to register with *WorkInTexas.com*, prepare résumés, and take keyboarding and other training services. They can also access child care and Adult Education and Literacy program information.

Additionally, the unit is handicap accessible with a wheelchair lift and a workstation equipped with Job Access with Speech (JAWS) and ZoomText, and a Braille printer. The MRL is also a self-contained wi-fi hotspot and has two printers for customers to use.

For more information on the Cameron Mobile Resource Lab, visit wfscameron.org/mobile.html.

Summer 2014 Texas Star Award Winners

The Texas Star Award recognizes TWC employees who perform above and beyond at promoting agency systems and solutions and provide outstanding customer service and support. The following distinguished professionals received the Star Award in the Summer of 2014.



Group Winner – 2008 Emergency Unemployment Compensation Team

Daniel Davis, Henry De La Cerda, Rinhold Everett, Holly Faubion, Eddie Foushee, Diana Harris, Laura Hernandez, Eric Holen, Christopher Kelley, Patricia Koopmann, David Leandro, Rosa Perez, Tracey Rideout, Wayne Spears, Jaye Turney, Michael Weaver and Larry Weishuhn



Photos by Amy Kincheloe

Group Winner – HB376 Texas Rising Star (TRS) Workgroup

Sue L. Flores, Adela R. Esquivel, Phil Warner, Regan Dobbs and Anjali Barnes



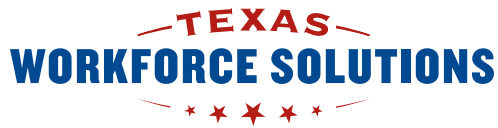
Texas Veterans Leadership Program Director Bob Gear Receives Patriot Award

The Texas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve recognized Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP) Director Bob Gear with its Patriot Award in July. The award recognizes efforts made to support military service members who also work in the civilian world through a wide range of measures including flexible schedules, time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families and granting leaves of absence if needed.

Gear retired as a first sergeant from the U.S. Army in March 2008. Gear served as the TVLP program veterans resource and referral coordinator for Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area from June 2008 until 2012, when he became the statewide TVLP director. For more information on TWC's veterans initiatives, visit texasworkforce.org/veterans.

2014 NAGLO Annual Conference

Presidio Independent School District Superintendent Dennis McEntire speaks to attendees at the National Association of Government Labor Officials Annual Conference, held in Austin June 28-30. McEntire discusses innovations to help students in his rural school district access job training and apprenticeships through distance learning and skills training boot camps. *Photo by Macy D. Hurwitz*



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www.cvworkforce.org

Lower Rio Grande Valley
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www.wfsolutions.com

Southeast Texas
409-719-4750
www.setworks.org

Alamo
210-272-3260
www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org

Greater Dallas
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www.wfsdallas.com

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830-591-0141
www.mrgwb.org

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www.spworkforce.org

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Deep East Texas
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www.detwork.org

North Central
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www.dfwjobs.com

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www.southtexasworkforce.org

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www.wfscameron.org

East Texas
903-984-8641
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North East Texas
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The Texas Workforce Commission, in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards, forms Texas Workforce Solutions.



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