Duke of Norfolk hosts event for veterans falling through employment cracks

Monday 20 May, 2024

The Duke of Norfolk —Earl Marshal of England has welcomed a first-of-its-kind networking event to support veterans to be hosted at his home, Arundel Castle in West Sussex. This free landmark event is designed to connect veterans struggling to find employment with organisations that wish to support them, is scheduled for July 1st.

“I had no hesitation in believing in the idea or concept and the connection to the Armed Forces Covenant to benefit veterans' employment. I believe it is a great initiative to support veterans with a successful outcome.”

Renford Marsden, the son of a WWII British Army veteran, is the organiser and sponsor of the event in partnership with RBLI, whose work involves finding employment for veterans.

Renford spent much of his late career working with the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD), making business trips to Afghanistan (OP HERRICK). His brief was to install and deliver end-user training for a database designed for the military. During one of his many extended business trips to Afghanistan, he was there so long that he qualified and was awarded the OP Herrick Operational Service Medal in 2007 as a civilian.

After a consuming but rewarding career, Renford faced struggles similar to those of many veterans when his contract ended. He found himself unemployed in his 50s, contending with the pervasive issue of ageism in the workforce. Unable to find work, he swallowed his pride and took on a zero-hours contract at McDonald's while retraining through distance learning. He later founded his business, The Trainer Explainer®. Renford is also the author of a book designed to help job seekers over 50, with a specific chapter addressing the unique needs of veterans. This chapter is used by the military employment company JobOPPO.

The idea of the event came about because of a conversation Renford had with Jean Rogers, veteran advocate and actress known for her role as Dolly Skilbeck on ITV’s Emmerdale. Jean came up with the event concept when discussing the challenges of the pervasive discrimination faced by veterans with Renford.

“I envisaged an exciting coming together in Arundel Castle’s Barons’ Hall on a significant day in the British Military’s history - July 1st - for those who have the need and those who can assist.” says Jean

The event aims to connect former Armed Forces members with prospective employers and organisations that have come forward expressing a wish to help them, including JobOppo, Southern Railway and Sussex Police. It has garnered widespread support, with over 70 guests confirmed interest.

“Many veterans are lonely, overlooked, and desperately needing help to find employment so this unique event will help them to get the support and friendship they need to improve their lives and even find gainful employment,” says Renford.

“I am overjoyed that we have been able to put together this opportunity to bridge the gap between veterans and employers,” says Renford. “We hope to encourage as many companies as possible to participate and pledge a donation of £1000 each to RBLI to help Lifeworks in Sussex. We could all feel incredibly proud if we are able to achieve this — bringing unemployed veterans into exciting teams and great companies in dignified paid work across the UK.”

This unique veterans event at Arundel Castle in July 2024, of which RBLI is charity partner, is sponsored by:

Wordsmith & Paper Limited and its trade mark brand, The Trainer Explainer®, under the leadership of its CEO and Founder, Mr Renford Marsden. The event will make a difference in promoting the values and goals of The Armed Forces Covenant county-wide and shine a spotlight on veteran recruitment in Sussex. The event aims to help veterans find out more about RBLI’s Lifeworks programme and link them to veteran-friendly employers in Sussex directly.

Editors Notes:

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Veterans :: Unemployment :: Royal British Legion :: Networking Event :: Armed Forces :: Military :: PTSD :: Support :: Charity :: Fundraising ::

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Military Personnel - Before and after leaving HM Forces, looking for employment as a veteran.

Personnel attend workshops to prepare for life in ‘civvy street’ when still serving in HM forces. Some may have future employer contacts through veterans they have worked with in either the Royal Navy, Fleet Air Arm, Royal Marines, Royal Air Force or British Army.

The problem with a military resume is that it will not be understood in ‘civvy street’; therefore, the language, terminology, qualifications and equivalence of military ranks to civilian salutations or titles must be simplified. Bear in mind most of the military leavers now have undertaken over 30 years of service within a different culture or bubble. They might have to re-skill by attending training courses to obtain currently recognised qualifications.

Some will have planned strategically and attended interviews for civilian jobs months before their military service end date and, therefore, have hope in another world with a confirmed job offer.

However, this is not the case for everyone with different life scenarios. Thus, making competing in the job market of ‘civvy street’ another battle altogether.

For many reasons, including dealing with health issues inherited during their service, it is another challenge to conquer. In addition, their comradeship and even sitting down for a cup of tea or coffee to chat (known as “a brew”) are not available anymore as they hand in their uniforms and return security passes, and if living on base, they may be homeless straight away or soon after.

So, some are not prepared, get stressed, start drinking or taking drugs and will sleep rough. They are certainly reluctant to share or trust anyone because they are proud and don’t want to be a burden in the unchartered waters of “civvy street”.

Therefore, they lose dignity, feel lonely and may hide a PTSD condition where their personality and mental behaviour will be inconsistent or, at worst, volatile.

A number of military charities were created in the 20th century, but one that stands head and shoulders above many was formed in 1919 and is called Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI). It is located at the Veterans Village at Aylesford in Kent.

Quotes:

“We actively encourage members of the Armed Forces and Military Backgrounds to apply and join us, we value the experience and skills they’ll bring to the service. There are a whole host of roles within Sussex Police – not just Police Officers where a military background would be welcomed.’ - **Sussex Police.**

"Joining the Royal Navy at 17 taught me important skills such as discipline, work ethic, and the ability to work as part of a team. These skills have proven invaluable in every job I've held since. Veterans are a true asset to any organisation, as our experiences provide us with numerous transferable skills that can benefit any team." - **Helen Richards, Founder and Director: The Little Calm Company and The Office Retreat.**

“I have long wanted to find a way to promote the need for Sussex veterans not only to find gainful employment after leaving the Services, but also to feel valued and hopeful of the future.

The Armed Forces Covenant was set up a decade ago to help ensure veterans and their families have the support and dignity they deserve from the Nation, but it needs more recognition.

All credit to Renford Marsden who is facilitating this in a wonderful way in partnership with the amazing RBLIndustries” - **Jean Rogers, actress known for her role as Dolly Skilbeck on ITV’s Emmerdale.**

“Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) was established in 1919 and the founders were well ahead of their time in providing skills and paid employment opportunity for disadvantaged veterans. Today RBLI is reaching over 1,000 veterans a year right across the UK who are overcoming long-term unemployment, depression and PTSD, life-changing injury, and also homelessness. The current employment landscape is particularly challenging for people who find applying for roles online impersonal, overwhelming and demoralising. Our Lifeworks employment programme is tailored for Armed Forces veterans and recognises their unique experiences and perceptions. We are proud that 80% of the unemployed veterans taking part in the Lifeworks programme are in paid work, or volunteering placements, 12 months on. I am hugely appreciative of Wordsmith & Paper, led by Mr Renford Marsden, for sponsoring this exciting new event. It is a unique opportunity for companies and employers to demonstrate their support

for The Armed Forces Covenant". - **Emma Nugent, Assistant Director of Strategic Development at RBLI.**

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