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Contact Carolyn Bobb, 240-393-7030 or cbobb@malaborers.org

“Veterans Green Jobs” Trainees Weatherize Military Home for Free

Pre-Veterans Day Event Unites Veterans, Labor and Environmental Groups to Create Jobs for Local Veterans, Energy-Saving Solutions for Military Families

Springfield, VA (November 9, 2010) – Five local veterans – all apprentices in a “Veterans Green Jobs” training program – weatherized the home of a fellow military family in Springfield, Virginia for free today.

The pre-Veterans day event was part of the Military Housing Energy Efficiency Project (MHEEP), a larger pilot program to weatherize more than 50 military homes in Virginia free-of-charge, create jobs for local veterans and protect the environment. Partners in the program include [Veterans Green Jobs](#), [Laborers International Union of North America](#) (LIUNA), [Sierra Club](#), [WeatherizeDC](#) and [Ardent360](#), a local home energy efficiency company.

“Veterans Day is about Americans coming together and honoring those who have served,” said Zack Bazzi, VGJ Director of Mid-Atlantic Programs at a press conference prior to the home weatherization. “With America still war, and unemployment and energy bills soaring at home, this program is uniting some diverse interest groups and giving back to the military community. We’re connecting unemployed veterans to job opportunities, while making military households more energy efficient at the same time. It’s an all-around win.”

LIUNA led the four-week classroom training effort for the veterans – nine total – who are now fully certified as weatherization technician/installers and undergoing a paid apprenticeship through Ardent360. The training was provided at no cost to the veterans, along with stipends, life skills classes and community service opportunities. Speaking to the program’s comprehensive approach, Bazzi continued: “We were not just aiming to create a well-trained veteran, but a well-rounded, highly marketable individual ready to compete in today’s workforce.”

Veterans Day comes at a difficult time for servicemen and women who are facing historically high unemployment. Reports estimate that the unemployment rate for male veterans between the ages of 18 and 24 is as high as 21.6 percent, well above the national average of 9.6 percent. With an economy that continues to lag and an estimated 100 million energy inefficient homes in America, weatherization could provide relief for thousands of workers, while saving homeowners an average of \$500 per year on their energy bills.

Sean Spurr is one of trainees in the pilot program that participated in the weatherization today, and is looking forward to the future: “Veterans Green Jobs gives one the ability to be confident that you receive good training to help you find some kind of niche in a variety of markets. I know that I will use what I have learned to either start my own business or work my way up the ladder in a corporation that will allow me to reach the goal that I have set for myself.”

During today’s home weatherization event, LIUNA trainers and supervisors from Ardent360 oversaw the trainees putting their new weatherization skills to work, which includes tightening the building envelope, adding thermal and moisture protection and improving the performance of mechanical systems.

For more information please visit: <http://veteransgreenjobs.org/>

Additional Statements of Support:

"The Military Housing Energy Efficiency Project is a perfect example of diverse partners coming together to solve multiple challenges with a common solution," said **Allison Chin, a member of the Sierra Club's National Board of Directors**. "This project has the potential to significantly reduce our carbon footprint, tackle the unemployment crisis and bring down the electricity bills for our military families."

"At LIUNA, we know the importance that proper training has in creating a skilled workforce that will help grow the economy. We are proud that we could partner with Veterans Green Jobs to provide much needed training to the men and women of the armed forces who have so bravely served their country. The partnership is a perfect example of how labor is helping in the communities where we live and work," said **Steve Lanning, LIUNA Tri-Fund Field Coordinator**.

"Clean energy jobs are an extraordinary opportunity for thousands of veterans looking for work. By tapping the dedication and drive of men and women who have served in our armed forces and equipping them with the tools and on-the-job-training experience needed to become weatherization technicians, we help to honor the contributions and sacrifices that they have made," said **Sam Witherbee, Field Director with WeatherizeDC**. "Expanding this initiative so that more veterans have the chance to secure family-sustaining jobs in this emerging market is a smart investment."

"In business, there are few chances to be part of an opportunity which makes sense on so many levels. We are supporting veterans who have sacrificed so much for all of us and are combating a challenging economy by creating good jobs in a new industry," said **Bob Weatherwax, President of Ardent360**. "For military families we are making their homes more comfortable, healthier and less expensive to operate. By making homes more energy efficient we are reducing the demand for foreign energy, as well as limiting the emissions of carbon into the atmosphere. As a small business, we are proud to be part of this program."

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