

Inaugural Summit

OCTOBER 21, 2010 NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS, WASHINGTON, D.C.



*We Are
Joining
Forces*

Joining Forces for Women Veterans

SPONSORED BY

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FOUNDATION
McCORMICK FOUNDATION
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CHARITABLE SERVICE TRUST



AARP® FOUNDATION

AARP Foundation is dedicated to serving vulnerable people 50+ by creating the solutions that help them secure the essentials and achieve their best life.

We congratulate Business and Professional Women's Foundation for addressing the needs of women veterans and look forward to support this important work now and in the future particularly through our women's scholarship program.

Through its workforce programs, AARP Foundation offers on-line assessments and skills training that helps older workers obtain jobs in their communities.

For more information go to
www.aarp.org/foundation



Every Step of the Way

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association – which is made up of 39 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for nearly one-in-three Americans – is proud to be a sponsor of this inaugural Summit and call to action for our country's women veterans.

Carolyn Peterson Durham, one of our returning women veterans, describes her successful reentry back to the civilian workplace.

"The day I had to break the news to management that I would have to leave the Association to fulfill my Reserve obligation was very emotional. Everyone was very supportive throughout the entire ordeal.

Although federal law states that employers had to hold our jobs, still when I returned I was afraid. I had a new manager, major department organizational and structural changes were under way, and I even had new software to learn. Yet, these fears were unfounded. In fact, transitioning back into the work force was a seamless process.

I consider myself to be one of the fortunate veterans, as the Association supported my efforts every step of the way. Exactly one year after leaving, everything just fell right into place. It was like I never left. The welcome 'home' was very genuine and heartwarming."

Carolyn Peterson Durham

Administrator, Plan Administrative
Cost Management
Federal Employee Program
Years of Service at BCBSA: 17 years

United States Navy Reserves
Petty Officer, Third Class
14 years Reserve,
1 year Active Duty





Roslyn Ridgeway

ROSLYN RIDGEWAY

Chair, Business and Professional Women's Foundation



Welcome to BPW Foundation's Inaugural Summit, *Joining Forces for Women Veterans*. This Summit is one more milestone in BPW Foundation's long history of advocating for working women, their families and workplaces. Over the years we have supported and fought for pay equity, work-life balance, workplace diversity, non-traditional jobs for women, workplace best practices, and successful workplaces. We continue to evolve to meet new challenges as the world of work changes. Ten years ago we would not have been meeting on this important and timely topic; because we didn't have more than 200,000 women serving in our armed forces and more that 1.8 million women veterans, a number that is growing exponentially.

When these women leave the military and transition back to the civilian world they face unique challenges while bringing special talents and skills. These leaders are wonderful resources for their communities, families and workplace and we must ensure that they are successful both in reintegrating into civilian life, including finding meaningful work that utilizes their aptitudes and talents.

As with all of BPW Foundation's programs, our work with women veterans is evidence-based. In 2007, we surveyed 1,600 women veterans about their transition from the military into the civilian workforce. BPW Foundation was the first non-governmental organization to examine this transition and investigate their workplace needs. Several publications resulted from this research including an in-depth analysis, *Women Veterans In Transition*.

Now is the time for action. As you meet here today and seek solutions to the challenges women veterans face, remember their dedication and the debt of gratitude we owe them and all of our veterans, military and families. This is something we must do.

Thank you for joining us and committing to support our women veterans.

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DEBORAH L. FRETT
CEO, Business and Professional Women's Foundation

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

October 7, 2010

Dear Friends,

Thank you for attending the Women Veterans Summit today. You all work so hard every day helping the women who deserve it most—and I am truly grateful for everything you do. And I want to especially thank the veterans here today for your service.

You know, this is a very personal issue for me. Growing up, I saw first-hand the many ways military service can affect veterans and their families. My father served in World War II and was among the first soldiers to land on Okinawa. He came home as a disabled veteran and was awarded the Purple Heart. Like many soldiers of his generation, my father didn't talk about his experiences during the war. In fact—we only really learned about them by reading his journals after he passed away.

I think that experience offers a larger lesson about veterans in general. They are reluctant to call attention to their service, and they are reluctant to ask for help. To tell you the truth, I think this is especially true for women veterans. That's why it is so important that we publicly recognize their contributions and sacrifices. It's up to us to make sure they get the recognition they have earned and guarantee they get the services and support they deserve.

As you know, the Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2009 was passed into law this past May. The legislation expands and improves health care services to women veterans. It makes sure the VA has the resources to handle the long-term needs associated with a larger women veteran population. I was proud to stand next to President Obama when he signed this bill into law.

I was also pleased to introduce the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Act of 2009, which would expand programs to help female homeless veterans and veterans with families move into stable housing. I am going to keep fighting to pass this critical bill that so many veterans with families desperately need.

You know, my work on women veterans issues began many years ago. I had been holding meetings with veterans where I would sit down and listen to their stories about the difficulties they were facing transitioning home. In many instances it was the male veterans who were standing up to discuss PTSD and other hardships. The women veterans felt alienated or alone and would only discuss their concerns in a closed setting. These women veterans all believed more could be done to help. So I took up their cause—and I promised them I would not stop fighting for the changes they needed.

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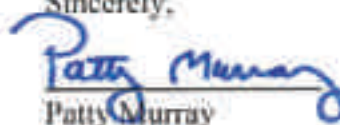
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This effort is about having a system that is sensitive to their needs. Where they can access the personal, specialized care they deserve. It's about ensuring that if something does go wrong for women veterans—the system is equipped to deal with it. And it's about making sure that women veterans know they don't have to whisper their problems anymore—they can stand up and talk about them with everyone else.

So thank you again for attending today's summit. And for everything you all do for our veterans, our families, and our nation.

You all do such great work fighting to help women veterans across the country—and I am never going to stop fighting by your side.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator

SUSAN A. DAVIS
22nd District, California

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October 21, 2010

Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to Washington, DC, for BPW Foundation's Inaugural Summit on *Joining Forces for Women Veterans*. I regret that I am unable to be with you for this very special event.

For more than ninety years, BPW has been focused on supporting women in the workplace, and I am proud to be a member of BPW Foundation's Women Joining Forces Advisory Council, part of their campaign to educate employers and policymakers about the unique needs and challenges of female veterans.

As Chairwoman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel and Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus Task Force on Women in the Military and Veterans, I have been privileged to honor the legacy of servicewomen in the past, the courage with which women serve today, and the enthusiasm of the young women who dream of serving this great nation in the future.

Returning home and transitioning back into home and work life can be a daunting process, and our women veterans deserve every support we can offer. This conference represents a unique blend of government, community, and corporate leaders, and it is my hope that you find these working sessions personally and professionally rewarding.

I commend BPW Foundation for their unwavering commitment to strong workplace, family, and community reintegration for female veterans. I extend my best wishes to you. Please know that your efforts are making a difference and are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

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October 6, 2010

Deborah L. Frett
President, Business and Professional Women's Foundation
1718 M Street, NW, #148
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Frett:

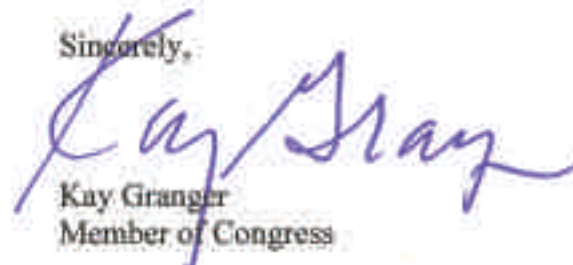
I am writing to welcome all the participants to the Business and Professional Women's Foundation Inaugural Summit, and I'd like to thank you, your organization, and your sponsors for hosting such an important event.

Veterans' issues have always been important to me, and our recent conflicts have brought increased focus on issues unique to women veterans. We now have larger numbers of women serving in the military than ever before, and the nature of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan mean more and more women are experiencing combat first-hand.

When these women veterans return, they are faced with many of the same challenges that their male counterparts have: access to medical care, access to benefits, both unemployment and underemployment, and homelessness. But many of our women veterans must also deal with motherhood, single parenthood, and a support system that has been traditionally focused on male veterans. We need to do better.

As a grateful nation, we must do all that we can to support our women veterans, and I thank you once again for organizing this summit.

Sincerely,



Kay Granger
Member of Congress

McCormick Foundation
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Chicago, Illinois 60601

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October 2010

Dear Summit Attendees,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the Inaugural Summit, *Joining Forces For Women Veterans*. Together with the Business and Professional Women's Foundation and Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust, the McCormick Foundation would like to thank you for your interest and involvement in improving the lives of women veterans.

Millions of America's bravest and most exceptional women serve our country in the Armed Forces. However, as this unique group of working women returns home to civilian responsibilities and families, their needs are not receiving adequate attention and support. In addition to the everyday challenges working women face, these female veterans have the added burdens associated with their service, including injuries, post-traumatic stress, and the challenges of prolonged family separation. We owe it to these individuals to provide the help they need.

We are very excited and see this Summit as an important day to educate and discuss the transition issues and needs of women veterans with business, government, and military leaders. Each one of you brings an important contribution to advancing the development of resources to support our women veterans. Whether you represent the private or public sector, we are grateful to you for your dedication to helping these brave, honorable women and look forward to our being able to combine resources and work together.

Our intention is to reach across the country through regional and local initiatives to build momentum and support that provides all women veterans with the resources and services they need for a successful transition to their communities, families, and careers. Your involvement in this inaugural summit will lay a critical foundation for future initiatives.

Thank you for your participation today and for your great work in supporting women veterans.

Sincerely,

David D. Hiller
President and CEO

Agenda

MORNING SESSIONS

8:00 – 9:00 **Registration and Continental Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:15 **Welcome & Opening Remarks**

Deborah L. Frett, *CEO, Business and Professional Women's Foundation*

Jack Amberg, *Senior Director, Veterans Programs, McCormick Foundation*

9:15 – 9:30 **Video - Faces of Women Veterans**

• Faces of Women Veterans

9:30 – 10:15 **Keynote Speaker**

• Valerie Jarrett, *Senior Advisor for Intergovernmental Affairs, the White House Council on Women and Governmental Affairs*

• Tammy Duckworth, *Assistant Secretary, Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Dept of Labor*

10:15 – 10:30 **B R E A K**

10:30 – 11:25 **Reintegration**

• Lynda Davis, Ph.D., *Founder, Do Institute; former Deputy Assistant Secretary, Community and Families*

• Linda Schwartz, *Committee on Veterans Affairs; President, Directors of Veteran Affairs*

• Kayla Williams, *Author*

• Women Veteran

11:30 – 12:30 **Homelessness**

• Sara Manzano-Diaz, *Director, Women's Bureau, U.S. Dept of Labor*

• Marsha Four, *Executive Director, Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center*

• Joyce Leneave, *Chaplain, The Greater Cincinnati Womens' American Legion Post 644 (Veteran)*

• Denise Washington (*Veteran*)

• Jessica Campbell (*Veteran*)

• ABC News Video

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

12:30 – 2:00 **LUNCH**

• Marie Johns, *Deputy Administrator, Small Business Administration; former President and CEO of Verizon, Washington, D.C.*

• Working lunch sessions

2:00 - 3:00 **Employment and Careers**

• Ray Jefferson, *Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment & Training Service (VETS), U.S. Dept of Labor*

WAITING FOR FINAL AGENDA

• Administrator for Region IV, Veterans' Employment & Training Service

• Programs, General

• Associates (Veteran)

• Issues Discussion

• about each topic

• available for Q & A

• policy

• report outs from

• possibilities

• Women Veterans National

• Establish Business Advisory Council

• Establish Promising Practices and Pilot Programs

• Develop Standards of Excellence for Joining Forces for Women Veterans National Fund and Grantee Program

• Follow up Regional Summits to build industry sector involvement and best practices

• Develop Research Agenda and implement

• Build support from all stakeholder groups for Policy Recommendations

5:00 – 6:30 **Cocktail Reception and Networking**

Speakers Biographies

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

L. TAMMY DUCKWORTH

Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

As Assistant Secretary, Tammy Duckworth represents and advises the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs on matters relating to media and public affairs. She directs departmental communications and oversees programs relating to intergovernmental relations, homeless veterans, consumer affairs, and the Department's six national rehabilitative special event programs. Duckworth served as the Director of Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs from 2006-2008. A Major in the Illinois Army National Guard, Duckworth served in Iraq. While piloting a helicopter mission she lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm. She received many decorations including the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. Since her recovery, Duckworth has dedicated her life to public service, advocating on behalf of disability rights and veterans. She declined her Army medical retirement to continue in the National Guard. In 2008 and 2009, she completed the Chicago Marathon. She is a civilian pilot.

LUNCHEON SPEAKER

MARIE C. JOHNS

Deputy Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration

In her current role, Marie Johns is a key contributor to the management of the agency and development of Small Business Administration policy. Prior to her appointment to the SBA, Johns was the Managing Member of L&L Consulting, LLC. Previously, she served as President of Verizon Washington, where she was responsible for nearly 2,000 employees and more than 800,000 customers, including many small businesses. Johns worked to develop products and services for Verizon's small business customers, and worked closely with Verizon's vendors,

suppliers and subcontractors, some of whom were SBA borrowers. Johns is the founder of the Washington DC Technology Council, former chair of Leadership Greater Washington and served for 10 years as a trustee at Howard University. As chair of the DC Chamber of Commerce, and its Small Business Committee, Johns helped small businesses get technical assistance and mentoring from larger area firms. In 2004, Johns was inducted in the Greater Washington Business Hall of Fame.



HOMELESSNESS

SARA MANZANO-DÍAZ

Director of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor

Sara Manzano-Díaz is the 16th Director of the Women's Bureau at the United States Department of Labor. She has spent her career in public service advocating for working class families, women and girls. Previously,

Manzano-Díaz was the Deputy Secretary of State for Regulatory Programs at the Pennsylvania Department of State and was a member of Governor Rendell's STEM Initiative Team supporting the development of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, and workforce development programs. From 1995 to 2002, Manzano-Díaz worked in various capacities at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development including as Deputy General Counsel for Civil Rights and Litigation. She also served as an Assistant Attorney General in New York and as a Judicial Assistant. She co-chaired The Forum of Executive Women's Mentoring Committee and participated in Madrinias, a program providing mentors for at-risk Latina girls.

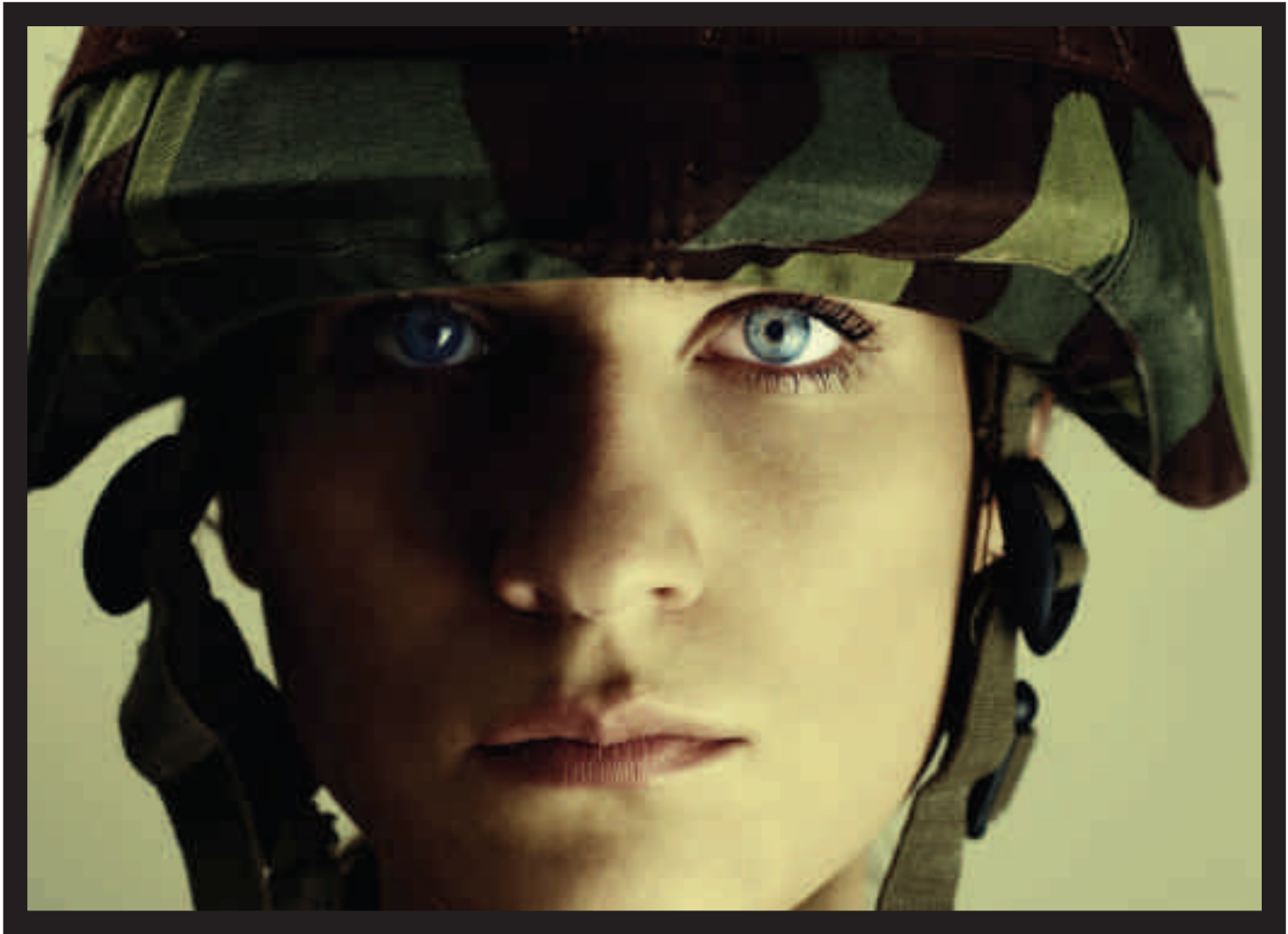
REINTEGRATION

LINDA SPOONSTER SCHWARTZ, PH.D.

President, National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs

Linda Schwartz has devoted her life to healing the wounds of war. She served in the United States Air Force (1967-1986) both on Active Duty and as a Reservist, retiring in 1986 after sustaining injuries while serving as an Air Force Flight Nurse. She received a Master's in Nursing from Yale and a Doctorate in Public Health from the Yale School of Medicine. Her honors include the National Commendation Medal of Vietnam Veterans of America, Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, Archon "First to Lead" from Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Society, and was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame in 2004.

Dr. Schwartz is currently President of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs. She has been Commissioner of The Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs since 2003 and is the first woman in its 146 year history to lead the agency.



REINTEGRATION

LYNDA C. DAVIS, PH.D.

Founder and CEO, See.Care.Do Institute

A former Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, Lynda Davis was a leader of the Reform of Case/Care Management for Wounded, Ill and Injured Service Members, Veterans and Their Families project. She founded See.Care.Do to support successful, and sustainable service – especially on behalf of our military, veterans and their families.

Dr. Davis, a former Signal Corps Officer in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, is the mother of a soldier and volunteers with the USO and TAPS. She served as Co-chair of the Defense Advisory Council on Women in the Military (DACOWITS), and is on the Veterans Rehabilitation Advisory Board (VACOR) of the VA, Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program Advisory Board, and the Women Joining Forces Advisory Council of BPW Foundation.

HOMELESSNESS

MARSHA FOUR

Executive Director, Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, Inc.

Marsha Four is a Vietnam in-country veteran who served on active duty with the Army Nurse Corps from 1967 to 1970. Ms. Four has been involved in veterans' issues at the local, regional and national level. She was the initiator and Executive Director of the Philadelphia Stand Down from 1993 through 1998.

A life member of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Delaware County Chapter 67, she has served on VVA's National Board of Directors since 1999 and is Chair of its National Women Veterans Committee. Ms. Four has served as a liaison/consultant to the Department of Veterans Affairs Secretarial Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans and was appointed to the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans in 1992, and again in 2001. Currently, she is the Executive

Director of The Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, a non-profit agency that has worked exclusively with military veterans for 30 years.

EMPLOYMENT & CAREERS

DAWN HALFAKER

Chief Executive Officer, Halfaker & Associates

Dawn Halfaker founded Halfaker and Associates in January 2006, to meet the growing need for dynamic consultants with specialized experience in providing national security services to the Federal Government.

Captain (Ret.) Dawn Halfaker was a Military Police Officer in the United States Army. After a tour in Korea, she deployed with the Third Infantry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She was wounded near Baghdad in 2004, earning a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. Halfaker served as a military liaison to the House Armed Services Committee and since 2005, she has worked with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency

(DARPA), specializing in technical consulting for the Defense Sciences Office. Halfaker remains active in veteran's affairs serving on several advisory committees. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point and a Master of Arts in Security Studies from Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

EMPLOYMENT & CAREERS

SUSAN SCHIEREN

Program Manager - Military & Sales Leadership Programs, General Electric (GE)

Susan Schieren is the Program Manager for GE Junior Officer Leadership Program (JOLP) and Global Commercial Leadership Program (CLP). For the past 11 years, she has been responsible for the development, strategy and execution for the recruiting, hiring, and transitioning of exiting military officer talent into GE JOLP (over 250 graduates) and company-wide direct hire positions (over 500 graduates).

Because of her extensive work in hiring and transitioning exiting military talent, Schieren was asked by Secretary of Labor Elaine Cho to serve on the Veteran's Employment, Training and Employer Outreach committee. In 2009 she was reappointed to the Committee.

Prior to joining GE, Schieren was enlisted in the US Air Force and served two years on active duty. While serving, Susan was injured and received an honorable discharge as a disabled veteran.

MODERATOR

ANN SULLIVAN

President, Madison Service Group, Inc.

Ann Sullivan is the President of Madison Services Group, Inc., a woman-owned company which provides government relations services to corporate and non-profit clients. She brings many years of government relations experience in the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, serving in key advisory roles. Ms. Sullivan works with the United States Congress as well as the United States government agencies to bring her clients' issues national attention. Her expertise includes government procurement, health care and tax issues affecting small businesses.

MSGI specializes in outreach to the small business community with an emphasis on women owned and minority businesses.

In addition, Ms. Sullivan founded and heads the International Association for Business and Health (IABH), a nonprofit advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., formed to advance the combined interests of business with the need for quality health care. In March 2010, Ms. Sullivan received the Enterprising Women of the Year Award.

WELCOME REMARKS

DEBORAH L. FRETT

CEO, Business and Professional Women's Foundation

Deborah L. Frett currently serves as the chief executive officer of Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation. BPW Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) research and education organization that is transforming workplaces with women and employers.

As CEO, she is a frequent speaker and panelist providing expertise in the areas of workforce development, workplace policy and job readiness as they pertain to working women and businesses. Key focus areas include women veterans, employer/best practices, green/sustainability, women in small business and inter-generational workforce.

Frett is engaged in policy discussions with regard to women veteran and sustainability issues as well as redefining the workplace to meet the needs of the 21st century. She has provided congressional testimony and served as an expert for key briefings on issues impacting working women, employers and veterans. Frett is a creative leader and has demonstrable experience ensuring that working women are included in today's marketplace.

WELCOME REMARKS

JACK AMBERG

Senior Director of Veterans Programs, McCormick Foundation

Jack Amberg began serving as senior director of Veterans Programs at the McCormick Foundation in June 2008. Amberg came to the Foundation after 26 years in the U.S. Army, most recently serving as the director of U.S. Army Public Affairs for the Midwest. During his military career, Amberg

served as the chief of public affairs for the U.S. Army at Camp Zama, Japan. In that position he was deployed to the Philippines in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Previous assignments took him to Kuwait, Germany, and Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Storm.

Amberg currently serves on the board of the USO of Illinois. He is on the selection committee for the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago's Hero awards and is the vice president of the West Point Society of Chicago. He is active in the military and media subcommittees of Chicago's Union League Club, the VFW and American Legion in Naperville, Ill., and is a first degree Knight of Columbus.

MICHELE S. JONES

Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, White House Liaison

Michele Jones was the first woman in the United States Army Reserve to reach the position of command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Reserve. She was the first female non-commissioned officer to serve in the highest enlisted position of a component of the U.S. Army, active or reserve, and was at one time the highest-ranking African-American female enlisted person in any branch of the United States military, as well as the highest-ranking enlisted African American in the Army Reserve. Jones retired from the military in 2007 after 25 years of service.





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As a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to improving the lives of people through financial support, Alliant Credit Union Foundation is delighted to provide a grant to the Business and Professional Women's Foundation.

We sincerely hope that our donation and the generous contributions of other organizations help bring about a tremendously successful Inaugural Summit. We're confident that the issues and ideas discussed here will result in significant assistance for women veterans transitioning to civilian life.

We're proud to join forces with BPW Foundation to support such a worthy cause...

and honored to help our courageous, dedicated, patriotic women veterans.



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Testimonials

“

I still feel that women veterans are at a distinct disadvantage when interviewing. We are not like any other group of interviewees and shouldn't be measured with the same yardstick. We are better. But we're different, and we always will be. We have developed far more executive and leadership skills and have had far more of these experiences in a short span of time than civilian women will ever have in a lifetime. We've had to. An employer would not go wrong in hiring any of us... We've had to prepare briefings for generals and admirals, present untold information in short, cohesive presentations to these flags on a continuing basis. We've delivered in peacetime, terrorism and war. We can certainly deliver [in the workplace].

From the beginning, we've had to be much tougher than our male counterparts. Our lives don't fit into a neat box, nor in a neat, short little answer to the interview questions, nor in the short pages of our resumes. We'd be the most employable group, persisting and achieving no matter what, though I don't believe that comes across in interviews. And we don't have a peer group to swap war stories with. In most cases, we're still treated as less than by male veterans--in 2010. So, we continue to persist, sans peer group, achieving, no matter what.

I am a unique case, since I've been running my own businesses for sixteen years, not really having been in a job-seeking position as a newly transitioning woman would. And none of us have much or any interview experience or resume-writing experience, yet, again, we'd still be the best bets an employer would ever make.

All we women veterans need is a chance. We will always deliver.

- Nancy La Rocque, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

”

“

As an Officer in the Air Force, I was forced to imagine the unimaginable. Today, I bring to my job at the Department of Veterans Affairs, problem-solving skills, helping to train physicians who heal fellow Veterans with technology like artificial arms, legs and feet, facial prosthetics replacing noses and eyes to ease suffering once thought unstoppable.

Up until the age of 23 when I prepared my first will, the question that haunted me most was "What if I die?" But once I began to train for missions like Bosnia, the question that came to haunt me most was not, "What if I die but what if I survive?" I never even served in combat... But the training was real enough and frightening enough to make me not want to fail. So I learned what matters -- like efficiency and procedure -- in being able to put my gas mask on with my eyes closed in less than six seconds because I quite likely may become for someone the difference between life and death. Again, the problem wasn't the dying, it was the surviving and how, if I failed, would I ever live with it?

I'm grateful I'm alive to see every sunset. But I'm still haunted. So I practice the many advantages there are to being haunted. Like imagining the worst case scenario: What if my people don't know how to evacuate the building where we work and there's a fire? What if I don't know the answer? What if nobody does? Then I better find out what my people can do so I know what we're capable of. I've learned our best chance for survival should the unimaginable become real, is being sober about my responsibility to others, and using our combined strengths like a force of nature. It's called teamwork, and corporations, like the military, can benefit from it.

- Monica Owczarzak, Captain, U.S. Air Force

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Testimonials

“

I feel blessed that I had the opportunity to voluntarily serve in the U.S. Army. My service enabled me to build a new me, discover a new world and serve my country! For that opportunity I will forever be grateful.

While serving in the military, I encountered challenges in the forms of physical ailments, strategic demotions and sexual harassment in my latter days of service. After standing up for myself, I was left with the decision to take a medical discharge, rather than the dishonorable discharge my superiors were seeking. This was my choice despite my many awards, merits and love for the service. I made the choice of medical discharge without first finding out what health issues I had, in order to save my name.

After a decade, which included bouts of ailments, homelessness, and career instability, I have persevered and look forward to assisting fellow female soldiers and veterans. I have a greater purpose and continue to be a soldier. I am establishing a transitional living facility for disabled women veterans like me; the goal is to provide training, psychological rehabilitation and guidance as they reclaim their lives within the civilian community.

I believe that my suffering will ease the transition of future veterans. I fully intend to support our country's disabled women veterans through their transitional journey.

- PFC, Veronica Harrison, U.S. Army

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“

As a World War II Air-Women Army Corps veteran, I have worked for the last 20 years with organizations which recognize and support women veterans. It has become apparent to me that the populace of this country is always surprised when the subject of women soldiers comes up. This lack of knowledge has been contributed to or initiated by the gap in education which does not deal with the history of this country's military services. Women have served their country as soldiers since the Revolutionary War. The reality of dealing with women in combat has come through clearly again in the legislative report of the National American Legion Commander to the joint session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees of Congress. After passing a Resolution initiated by an all-female American Legion Post (#644) the National American Legion acknowledges the dissonance between the Department Of Defense law which does not assign women to combat situations and the fact that women are serving in combat just as their male counterparts are and not receiving the same benefits, such as awards (recognition), pay, training and health care. This assignment law needs to change.

-Lynn Ashley, PhD, 2nd Vice Commander American Legion Post #644.

”

Top Ten Recommendations for Employers

Support Women Veterans in the Workplace

1. Promote a positive attitude and appreciation toward military service.
2. Employers and workplaces should understand the unique skills and knowledge that women veterans possess. Determine how to tap into these skill sets and how to transfer them to benefit your organization.
3. Create a partnership with nonprofit, veteran and/or community organizations to conduct and utilize evidence-based research and share lessons learned.
4. Educate the HR department, management and workplace about how to successfully provide access to employees with disabilities.
5. Provide access to existing leadership and targeted skills training programs within your organization.
6. Increase awareness among all employees, not only leadership, about the importance and value of veterans in your workplace.
7. Encourage and practice networking and mentoring for all employees throughout your organization.
8. Offer career counseling or planning services and provide clear avenues and guidelines for career advancement.
9. Ensure that HR professionals are knowledgeable about and understand veteran benefits and services. Know where to find veteran resources and support services.
10. Understand that many workplace challenges experienced by women veterans are shared by all working women including work-life balance. Have programs that allow for flexibility in the workplace- be innovative.



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Sheila M. Parson has held very diverse executive leadership positions throughout her career, currently working at AT&T as a Senior Staffing/Recruiting Manager for the Human Resource Department. At AT&T she has trained employees in diversity, mentoring, self-assessment, self-improvement, leadership development, customer service, and she is also a trainer for the Human Resource Organization.

Parson, who has also received the SBC President's Award (2004), the Professional Women of SBC's RAVE Award (2005) recognizing today's top female leaders, Meritorious Service Award (2005) from the AT&T Pioneers and was nominated for a national award by the AT&T Pioneers for her creation and planning of the Pioneer IDOL which raised over \$10,000 for Detroit area homeless (2006)

In 2008 the Detroit City Council presented her with a Testimonial Resolution for her planning of the AT&T Pioneer Michigan & QSA Foundation Celebration for homeless children that has hosted a Celebration for over 450+ homeless children & Military Families each year since 2002. Parson is also the founder of the QSA Foundation, which is a non-profit 501c3 corporation that helps homeless children and military families as well as promotes community service programs, leadership, and training within several communities.

Parson has an extensive honorable military background where she started out as an enlisted Army Soldier, was activated for Desert Storm, Desert Shield and then went to Officer Candidate School and is now a retired United States Captain. She has served in evacuation hospitals, truck platoons, and Military Police units. Parson was a Super Captain/Training Captain for the Super Bowl XL Host Committee and provided supervision and the training for all of the volunteers for the Super Bowl XL in Detroit (2006).

Parson is currently the Vice President of the Southeast Chapter of AT&T Veterans, one of ten Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) that support the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion through their efforts in the workplace, the marketplace, and the community. Parson has her B.A. in Communications and Journalism, her M.A. in Business and Human Resource Management and her Ph.D. in Organizational Development and Human Resources.

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Did You Know...

By the year 2020, it is projected that women veterans will comprise over 10 percent of the veteran population. - *Center for Women Veterans, Department of Veterans Affairs*

In 2008 there were approximately 1,802,491 female veterans. - *Center for Women Veterans, Department of Veterans Affairs*

Female veterans ages 25 to 34 have a relatively high unemployment rate of 15.1 percent, and those between of the ages 35 to 44 had an unemployment rate of 7.5 percent. - *Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008*

As of January 2010, the unemployment rate for women veterans was 11.2 percent compared to 9.4 percent for veteran men. - *Bureau of Labor Statistics*

The estimated median age of all U.S. women veterans is 47, compared with male veterans at 61.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression in women veterans are two of the top three conditions treated. - *Department of Veterans Affairs*

As of the fall of 2009, women made up more than 14 percent of active duty military, more than 17 percent of active reserves and 15 percent of the National Guard.

The risk of homelessness for veteran women is 3.6 times as likely as non-veteran women. - *Robert Rosenbeck, Director of Veteran's Affairs Northeast Program Evaluation Center*

Homeless female veterans are more likely than their male counterparts to be married and suffer from serious psychiatric illness, and are less likely to be employed. - *National Coalition for the Homeless*

Fifteen to twenty-three (15-23) percent of women veterans reported experiencing sexual trauma while on active duty. - *Bureau of Labor and Statistics*

There are 2,467,000 fewer veterans overall since 1986, but since that time the number of women veterans has increased by 566,000. - *Bureau of Labor and Statistics and Women's Research & Education Institute*

Women veterans report that it takes an average of seven years to become fully acclimated to civilian life upon return from deployment. - *Business and Professional Women's Foundation, Women Veterans in Transition report*

Women veterans are a diverse population with 15.5 percent under the age of 35 and 32 percent women of color. - *Department of Veterans Affairs*

Women veterans encounter many of the same challenges that impact all working women including pay equity, lack of benefits such as paid sick leave and equal access to healthcare, career training and continuing education. - *Business and Professional Women's Foundation, Women Veterans in Transition report*

Women veterans are more reluctant to seek out the help of the Veterans Administration and utilize the benefits they've earned, possibly because of a lack of knowledge of their eligibility. - *Disabled American Veterans*



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Business and Professional Women's Foundation is committed to giving back to women veterans who have given so much for all of us.

The McCormick Foundation proudly supports its inaugural summit, **Joining Forces for Women Veterans**, and its efforts to help heighten awareness of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by women veterans in their transition to civilian career, family, and community lives.



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