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BPW Foundation Challenges Businesses to Join Deployment of Joining Forces Women Veterans Mentoring Campaign

Washington, DC - Business and Professional Women's Foundation today announced the **Joining Forces Women Veterans Mentoring Leadership Challenge Campaign** with a \$50,000 commitment to deploy the program. BPW Foundation CEO Deborah L. Frett announced the Challenge during the National Chamber Foundation's 4th Annual Hiring Our Heroes awards event.

"Over the past year, BPW Foundation has been developing and evaluating the tools, outreach, and capacity to connect thousands of women veterans and military wives with employment and career mentors to help them navigate the challenging path to successful careers in the civilian workplace," Deborah L. Frett said. "Working with our partner the U.S. Chamber, our first year goal is to complete 10,000 mentoring relationships. But that is just a start and we are challenging all corporations and foundations to join with a financial commitment as we work towards a goal of 100,000 mentorships."

Many veterans are facing hard times during this grim economic period. The overall jobless rate has been hovering around 9 percent, however for veterans it has been almost two percentage points higher in 2011. In October, the unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans was 12.1%, percent for men and 14.7 percent for women.

BPW Foundation hosted the Inaugural **Joining Forces for Women Veterans (JFWV) National Summit** in October, 2010, and identified an ongoing need for women veterans and military spouses to find informed, trusted outlets to assess their goals and navigate their way to successful careers -- careers that provide economic stability for themselves and their families. The Office of the First Lady and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have recognized this "mentorship gap" in their selection of BPW as point organization for a large-scale mentoring initiative to benefit women veterans and military wives.

"We at BPW Foundation have laid the groundwork, researched and identified the barriers facing women veterans, assembled the mentorship framework, and are building a pipeline to access the growing population of women veterans and the respective mentors," Frett reported. She then challenged the organizations present to join BPW Foundation as Leadership Partners to deploy the **Joining Forces for Women Veterans Mentorship Program**.

"As a nation, we cannot fail to support our women veterans during the challenging transition from service to civilian life. The **JFWV Mentorship Program** will spotlight these women, help them find their way into the workforce, and navigate the career path with confidence. Our

coordinated efforts will create a community of support and guidance for these sheroes,” Frett concluded.

The JFWV Mentorship Program will enable women mentors to tap their own experiences in the workplace to help women veterans successfully enter the civilian workforce, positioning their military expertise and skills for long-term career stability and success. The program will also help make connections for military spouses who often can not find jobs that match their skills and education because of the hardships of military life including many moves and living in areas dominated by a military base.

The first organization to meet the BPW Foundation Leadership challenge was the AARP Foundation.

To learn more about the mentorship program and Leadership Partner opportunities, visit www.womenjoiningforces.org.

BPW Foundation supports workforce development programs and workplace policies that recognize the diverse needs of working women, communities and businesses. BPW Foundation is a 501 © (3) research and education organization. To learn more, visit [BPW Foundation – Business and Professional Women](http://www.bpwfoundation.org)

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