



UNION PLUMBERS, FITTERS, WELDERS AND HVAC TECHS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Rick Terven Sr.

(410) 269-2000

rickt@uanet.org

United Association's Veterans in Piping program graduates first Wisconsin class

14 veterans placed with contractors in Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas

GREEN BAY, Wisconsin – The United Association has 14 new apprentices, with the graduation of its first Wisconsin-based class of the Veterans in Piping initiative.

This class is the latest of a nationwide partnership that trains veterans for, and places them in, careers in the plumbing and pipefitting industry. Ten will remain in Wisconsin. Two will go to work in Minneapolis. One will work in South Dakota, and one will work in North Dakota. The class includes one female and two minority veterans.

“These graduates now join the approximately 40,000 apprentices of the United Association,” said William Hite, General President of the United Association of Plumbers, Pipe Fitters, Welders and HVACR Technicians. Hite launched the program in 2008, and received the Military Officers Association of America’s Distinguished Service Award earlier this year for his dedication to VIP and other initiatives for military personnel. “They are an outstanding group of people who are dedicated and talented, and we are proud they chose to join our trade.”

The apprentices include:

- Paul Anderson of Oconto Falls, served four combat tours of duty in Iraq, three as a Marine and one in the National Guard. As he transitioned from the Marines, he searched for a job that was more than just a job. “I found myself wanting a career,” said Anderson, who will go to work for Mechanical Technologies Inc. in Green Bay as an apprentice with Local

400. After getting an email about the VIP program, he knew “I could go somewhere with this career.”

- Charles Buari of Middleton is a native of Ghana. He came to the United States five years ago and is a member of the National Guard. He was trained as a refrigeration and air conditioning technician in the military, training that gave him a good base for the VIP program. Now a citizen, he hopes his wife will be able to join him soon as he goes to work with Local 539 in Minneapolis.
- Geoff Brand of Wausau served in the Navy from 1979-1983. He held different types of jobs throughout the years. After his wife died, he found himself homeless and living in a shelter for veterans in Wausau. It is there he learned about VIP. “This is a phenomenal opportunity for me,” said Brand, who will be an apprentice with Local 601 in Madison.

The next class in Wisconsin begins in July. Recruiting is already underway. Classes are held at Camp Williams, and are open to veterans from throughout the Midwest. The Wisconsin initiative is a partnership between the United Association, the Wisconsin Army National Guard and the Department of Workforce Development. The United Association provides the training for free, and guarantees a job for successful graduates. It includes 18 weeks of welding training and two weeks of re-entry training.

Camp Williams is the third VIP site nationwide. The first is in Lacey, Wash. The second is at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Combined, the initiatives have graduated more than 200 veterans from all branches of service.

Mike Arndt, director of training for the United Association, congratulated the graduates and thanked them for their service. “It does my heart good that we are able to help these deserving young people,” he said. “We are so proud to have them coming on board with us.”

Anne St. Eloi, a United Association special representative who works with the VIP program, is deeply impressed with the caliber of students. “Each of these students has an amazing story,” she said. “We are so very fortunate to have them.”

The two weeks of transition training is led by Judae Bost’n, Ed.D.

“Military members and veterans are often unaware of the incredible skills they developed while serving,” Bost’n said. “In the ‘re-booting’ training, they are immersed in an accelerated process to assess, clarify and hone their strengths; find out how they learn and process information so they can take full advantage of the training provided to prepare to enter a new band of brothers and sisters, the locals who will be their home.”

Ken Grant, director of the office of veteran services at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, said these veterans showcase Wisconsin’s strong work ethic.

“We’ve got 14 veterans who are now employed,” he said. “Not only are they employed, they’ve started a career.”

One of the Wisconsin locals supporting the program is Local 434, which represents the central and western portions of Wisconsin.

“This program is helping us create the well-trained workforce we desperately need,” said Terry Hayden, business manager. “These veterans come to us with exceptional skills. Contractors who hire these apprentices can expect high productivity from day one.”

One of the contractors hiring members of this VIP class is Michael Christensen of H&H Industries of Madison. He chose to hire three VIPs.

“To get this caliber of candidate into our trade is an excellent opportunity,” Christensen said.

For more information about the VIP program, go to www.uavip.org.

The graduates, resident city, placement city, local
Justin Engelkens, Belleville, Madison, Local 601
Zackary Romanowski, Chippewa Falls, Madison, Local 601
Cassidy Gunderson, Grand Chute, Madison, Local 601
George Maxwell, Green Bay, Minot, N.D., Local 300
Michael Johnson, Menominee, Madison, Local 601
Charles Buari, Middleton, Minneapolis, Local 539
Charles Cluney, Oak Creek, Madison, Local 601
Paul Anderson, Oconto Falls, Green Bay, Local 400
Benjamin Eskola, Osceola, LaCrosse, Local 434
Nicholas McGeshick, Rhinelander, Sioux Falls, S.D., Local 300
Cody Fegraeus, Superior, Madison, Local 601
Geoff Brand, Wausau, Madison, Local 601
Michael Dunlop, Wausau, Minneapolis, Local 539
Jacob Nieft, Wisconsin Rapids, Eau Claire, Local 434

About the United Association

The United Association is a multi-craft union whose members are engaged in the fabrication, installation and servicing of piping systems. There are approximately 340,000 highly-skilled United Association members who belong to more than 300 individual local unions across North America. The United Association has been training qualified pipe tradesmen longer than anyone else in the industry, with premier training programs including five-year apprenticeship programs, extensive journeyman training, organized instructor training, and certification programs.