

## Job Connection Education Program - 1000th Hired Recognition Event

Updated about 6 months ago

Today, 24 August, I attended the Recognition Ceremony for the 1000th individual hired under the Job Connection Education Program and heard directly from TXARNG Soldiers what an incredible difference this program has made in their lives. JCEP helps National Guard Service Members and their spouses find careers if they are unemployed or under-employed. The success stories from JCEP participants are nothing short of inspiring. The JCEP employment partnership really does offer so much to TXARNG Soldiers and their spouses.

I encourage you to check out this program and share it with other TXARNG Soldiers as well as your civilian employers, if you are fully employed. We must continue to help grow this program to support more service members in our state. Texas was chosen as the first site for the Job Connection Education Program and we have had the highest success rate in our state. Let's keep up the good work and continue to show the rest of the country we're Texas Strong!

<http://www.jcep.info/>





# TEXVET

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On Friday, August 24, 2012, I attended the Texas Military Forces Job Connection Education Program's 1000<sup>th</sup> Hired Recognition Ceremony at the Texas State Capitol in Austin. It was a great event, highlighted by the exciting and optimistic keynote by our Secretary of State, Esperanza "Hope" Andrade. I have the indefatigable Shandra Sponsler of the Texas Military Forces Family Programs to thank for the invite and was happy to see that TexVet friends like Bob Gear and Brigadier General Orlando Salinas, as well as American hero and now Texas State Senator Brian Birdwell were in attendance.

The Job Connection Education Program (JCEP) staff was piloted in Texas to help Guard and Reserve Service Members and their spouses who are unemployed or under-employed find careers. Offered by the Army National Guard, dedicated training and development specialists and a skilled business advisor assist participants in making their job connections. Texas was chosen as the first site for the Job Connection Education Program. (Description from their website at [www.jcep.info](http://www.jcep.info)) Professionals provide counseling, employment or education assistance, resume and interview training, online job search training, and personal assistance from a business advisor working with local employers. As the ceremony attested, Texas has been very successful in matching troops to jobs and in just about a year, has placed 1,000 Guardsmen with good employers. This is good for the state and good for the troops. As Lt. Col. Weigl, visiting from Washington D.C. pointed out "we can't take care of Soldiers if they are unemployed."

Speakers included Spec. Gerardo Botello, whose job disappeared while he was in Iraq and now works at the Botanic Research Institute of Texas and the 1,000<sup>th</sup> participant hired from the program – the enthusiastic Anthony Christmas, now employed as a District Manager for Aramark Uniform Services. Companies and employers recognized included Allied Barton Security Services, Laser Shot, inc., and Earl Portnoy, and Maj. Brian Hildebrand.

While the Secretary of State was speaking, it dawned on me that Sunday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of August this year, was International Women's Recognition Day. While there is a long way to go in women's equality, it was hard to see at this ceremony, where the emcee was a successful military officer – Lt. Col. Alba Villanueva. She introduced the commander of the Texas Army National Guard, the nation's only Guard unit with a complete combat division assigned – Maj. Gen. Joyce Stevens. She presented awards with Texas' female Secretary of State honoring a program headed by a woman – JCEP's Dinetha Thompson. Interesting that all these women were recognizing the men they'd help find jobs. Yes, society has a ways to go but in Texas, women can, and do, lead and help all those around them.

To find out more about the JCEP program, visit their website at [www.JCEP.info](http://www.JCEP.info).

<http://www.texvet.org/node/21713>