

Tennessee Guard recognizes 1,000th member hired by new jobs program



Maj. Gen. Max Haston, the adjutant general of Tennessee, congratulates 2nd Lt. Ian Joyner and his wife Jennifer for being the 1,000th Tennessee National Guard member hired through the Job Connection Education Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Niki Gentry/Released)

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (10/17/13) - Maj. Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee's adjutant general, recognized executives Jeff Young and Jessica Pierucki from the Altria Group for hiring 2nd Lt. Ian Joyner as the 1,000th Tennessee National Guard member employed through the Job Connection Education Program or (JCEP).

Joyner's employment represents a milestone in the nearly 2-year-old business partnership program assisting National Guard members and their families find jobs across the state.

Attending the ceremony from the National Guard Bureau were Dinetha Thompson, the National JCEP manager, and Shanon Hartigan, site director with Paxen Learning, the agency that contracts JCEP state coordinators who assist service members and their families at local levels.

So far, Tennessee's JCEP, which is led by retired Tennessee National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Bill Marley, has successfully found employment for 1,130 Tennessee Guard members and their families since inception only 15 months ago.

More than 1,400 individuals have registered for assistance.

Working with the Tennessee Department of Labor, local employers, various agencies, and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), Tennessee has become the most successful JCEP program in the nation.

"Fortunately, as our Tennessee government works diligently to reduce the state unemployment rate every day, our force has been able to support this effort by decreasing last year's unemployment in the National Guard by 7.5 percent," stated Haston. "While we recognize our 1,000th hire today, an average of 75 service or family members a month are being placed in large and small businesses alike statewide." Altria Group's Section Sales Director Jessica Pierucki said, "We are very excited to have Ian join our team in Tennessee and can't say enough about the appreciation we have for everything everyone does to support our country."

"When I got back from Afghanistan, Mr. Marley stepped up and took personal interest in each and every person who came back to help us gain a good career," said Joyner.

The initial uncertainty when entering the pilot program with JCEP was a slight concern for Joyner, yet as the process moved forward, he gained a tremendous opportunity with his civilian career after serving in Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The goal of finding positions and ultimately establishing careers for the long term is key to the program. JCEP has proven to be a tremendous asset for members of the Tennessee National Guard and their families," said Marley.