

SGT Gilbert Gomez is a recent retiree from the Texas Army National Guard's 72<sup>nd</sup> IBCT and has over 20 years in Logistics. His introduction to the Job Connection Education Program (JCEP) was last fall, delivering boxes to the newly opened office at the Westheimer Armory, where he was working as a Supply Tech. There, he met Mary Weaver, a Training & Development Specialist with JCEP. He said, "You were so nice and shared all about JCEP. You gave me your business card in case I ever needed assistance in finding employment." Gilbert continued, "My first thought was yeah, right; you can help me." He further stated, "I gave your card away because I didn't think I needed help finding a job."



After retiring, Gilbert found that the job market had changed over the years and he did need help with his job search. He started out going to the Texas Veteran's Commission for job search assistance. He shared, "They [TWC] were alright. They provided some guidance, but I wanted something more." Adia Smith, a Veteran Resource and Referral Specialist, with the Texas Workforce Commission, encouraged Gilbert to meet with a JCEP team member to enhance his interviewing skills. That's when Gilbert remembered the card he had given away.

Gilbert went back to where it all began. He humbly stated, "I have to apologize, I really didn't think I would need your [JCEP] assistance. But, when I realized I needed help, I remembered where to go to get it." He met with Kendrea Roberson, a JCEP Case Manager. She helped Gilbert create a civilian resume that reflected his military experience. Unfortunately, a strong resume was not enough for him to obtain employment. His interview skills needed to be stronger.

All the years Gilbert served in the military, he was trained not to talk too much about his job, due to the level of his security clearance. He shared, "Once I got out employers would ask, "What did you do?" I didn't know how to respond." Gilbert stated his interviewing skills needed improvement because his words wouldn't come out right and he was unsure of what he could or could not say about his job duties. He stated, "JCEP had a practice interview and I learned how to say and answer questions better." Gilbert shared that his current supervisor is ex-military and he feels comfortable communicating with him as a result of the interview practice provided by Efren Villanueva, the JCEP Business Advisor.

Gilbert obtained employment, through JCEP's employer partnership. He is now working for a local hospital decontaminating equipment. A skill he learned while serving his country.

When asked, "What about JCEP has impacted you the most?" Gilbert responded, "Professionalism! They showed an interest in me. They really go out of the way to assist a Soldier." He went on to say, "They took me in, gave me love, and taught/guided me all the way to finding a civilian job."

When asked if Gilbert had any final thoughts, he replied, "You need to go to JCEP because they can help you. It's worth the time. JCEP should become a permanent part of the Texas Army National Guard so they can always be there for the Soldiers."