



NORTHWEST

# LABOR PRESS

Volume 108  
Number 22  
November 16, 2007  
Portland

## At Career & Benefits Fair

# Craft unions welcome veterans into training programs

National Guard and reserve members who are returning from war are finding the welcome mat is out at union apprenticeship training programs in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

At a Veterans Career & Benefits Fair Nov. 3 at Clackamas Community College, more than a dozen of the 58 informational booths were sponsored by union training programs.

“Apprenticeship training (and construction work) is a perfect fit for a lot of our people,” said Oregon National Guard Brigadier General Michael Caldwell, deputy director of the Oregon Military Department. “Labor unions have been superb working to get soldiers plugged into their programs.”

An estimated 700 veterans — including many who recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan — attended the career fair, which was open to all military veterans, including those from Vietnam.

Because of their military experience, Caldwell said veterans bring immediate special skills to the workplace: They are disciplined, they can follow instructions, and they are not afraid to work hard. “But making the right connections can be difficult,” he explained. “Many of these young kids are not



**(PHOTO LEFT)** Joe Luna (sitting), apprenticeship coordinator for the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers and a former Marine, discusses the benefits of apprenticeship training with a soldier attending a Veterans Career & Benefits Fair Nov. 3 at Clackamas Community College. **(PHOTO RIGHT)** Sheet Metal Workers Local 16’s HVAC & Metals Institute was one of 13 training programs at the fair recruiting apprentices. Staffing their booth was Ric Olander (right), assistant director of apprenticeship, and Joe Harris, a business development agent for Local 16.

aware of this opportunity.”

To help military veterans transition back to civilian life, the Oregon National Guard and the Oregon Apprenticeship and Training Council have made arrangements that gives veterans special consideration for apprenticeship placement. Military veterans also can

get credit for previous work experience, which allows them to advance more rapidly to journey-level status.

“Servicemen and women will receive the best training in the trade of their choice. They will be paid while learning, and they will come out with a union career in the construction indus-

try — a career that pays a living wage and provides great family benefits,” said Glenn Shuck, executive director of Labor’s Community Service Agency. Shuck helped coordinate the process that resulted in the agreement between the National Guard and the Apprenticeship and Training Council. LCSA

also is a contract partner with the Veterans Workforce Investment Program, which assists veterans with training, job placement and other services when they return from active duty.

Joe Luna, apprenticeship coordinator for the Portland-based Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers and a former Marine, said veterans can apply for the bricklayer, tilesetter and terrazzo workers program at any time and that the program has a procedure for direct entry for soldiers with the proper skill set.

Luna also said that veterans in his program can use GI Bill benefits while enrolled. “It’s like going to college,” he said.

“Most training programs are approved for the GI Bill,” confirmed Mel Lowney of Helmets to Hardhats, a partnership program between the national AFL-CIO Building Trades Department, the signatory Construction Industry Employer Associations, and the U.S. military services.

For more information about the Helmets to Hardhats program, go to [www.helmetstohardhats.org](http://www.helmetstohardhats.org).

Ric Olander, assistant director of apprenticeship at the HVAC & Metals

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## Labor celebrates its history with Arts Festival

November is Labor History Month in Oregon, so to celebrate, the Northwest Oregon Labor Council held the first-ever Pacific Northwest Labor Arts Festival Nov. 10 at Portland State University.

Featured performers included Anne Feeney (in photo second from left, singing with — from left to right — Grace Cox of Citizens Band and Susan Lewis and Janet Stecher of Rebel Voices of Seattle); hip-hopster Mic Crenshaw of Portland; folk music legend Dick Weissman; labor songwriter Paul McKenna and others.

“It was a great lineup of entertainment. I hope we can do it again,” said Festival Coordinator Jim Cook. Cook, a retired member of Letter Carriers Branch 82, is chair of the labor council’s Labor History Committee.

The Labor Arts Festival combined various art forms showcasing working class culture, pride and solidarity. For example, the Museum of People’s Art in Bay City displayed period pieces from the Works Progress Administration while Swedish political and labor artist Julie Leonardsson presented “Outside the Lines/International perspective of class struggles.”



Photo by John Acerbi