



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR FAYETTE COUNTY VETERANS

Uniontown, PA – The Private Industry Council (PIC) recently announced a variety of free educational opportunities designed exclusively for Fayette County veterans.

PIC recently received two grants - \$193,034.50 from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and \$150,000 from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation - that were used to establish the Veterans Employment Program (VEP) and AgVets Project, respectively.

PIC Workforce Manager Erika Doyle said efforts are now under way to recruit local veterans who may be interested in receiving free tuition for training programs at Penn State Fayette, Laurel Business Institute and Douglas Education Center.

“It’s free money to help our veterans train for careers in market and demand, and they will even get stipends to help support them while they’re completing their training. The goal of these programs is to help them find full-time employment with self-sustaining wages and benefits,” Doyle said. “We want to make sure we’re giving our veterans the specialized services they deserve.”

The VEP grant will fund training for a total of 36 veterans through the following programs:

- CDL Class A - Douglas Education Center
- Welding - Laurel Business Institute
- Building Auditor Certification - Penn State Fayette

Program participants will also receive case management and supportive career services from PIC officials, including Career Pathways classes, group sessions with behavioral and learning support, assessments, stipends, help finding employment and more. Veterans will also have the option to obtain a Work Ethics Certificate through the Education and Technology Institute (ETI).

The AgVets Project grant will also fund training for at least 20 veterans through the following programs:

- CDL Class A - Douglas Education Center
- Heavy Equipment Operations - Douglas Education Center
- Farming & Butchering - on-site training at various local farms and businesses

Those participating through AgVets will receive many of the same services as the VEP program, as well as other preliminary classes, including ergonomics and logistics training. Doyle said AgVets was created because agriculture is “a backbone for Fayette County.”

“This is the first time we’ve ever done anything like either of these programs, but agriculture is one of our high-priority occupations. Incorporating veterans to help with farm work can be therapeutic, especially if it’s an individual who may need a little support,” she said. “We have a lot of veterans that

are unemployed, and we're trying to make sure they have those connections through PIC and CareerLink."

Fayette County Veteran Affairs Director Brian Bensen said the PIC programs will be extremely beneficial for local veterans, especially those who may be facing difficulties.

"A lot of veterans, after their service, feel like they don't have a sense of purpose anymore. They may be unable to find work or want a new career; or maybe they don't have the means to get an education or the information to find this training, so they give up on it," Bensen said. "Something like this can inspire them to get out there and find that purpose again; to be contributing members of society."

Bensen said the veterans who participate in the PIC programs may have the opportunity to meet others like them and form their own supportive communities.

"I think it's neat that there's a chance to bring some of these vets together in training classes. Learning together and having that camaraderie can be really beneficial," he said. "Our veterans have given us so much. The least we can do is provide them with the educational opportunities to better themselves."

Doyle, whose husband, father and father-in-law are all veterans, said she's "very appreciative" of veterans and hopes the new programs will provide them with unique opportunities.

"I have a family full of veterans and having watched some of the struggles they have, it puts things into perspective. It makes me look at some of the barriers they may have faced a little differently," she said. "If you're a Fayette County veteran, all you have to do is call us, and we'll connect you with our veterans employment specialist who can help dissolve any barriers that might be there."

Fayette County veterans can sign up for the program by calling the Private Industry Council at 412-554-2503. For more information, contact Erika Doyle at edoyle@privateindustrycouncil.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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