



NEWS RELEASE

Workforce Development Board

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December 20, 2017

AJCC transforms life of Marine vet with 3 degrees

Marine Corps veteran Gregory Lincoln was 59 when word came down that his government contract position was being eliminated. Making matters worse, a series of mix-ups caused his final paycheck to be garnished and unemployment benefits to be denied.

“My family was facing our darkest moment ever and we had no hope,” Lincoln says. “I was making \$80,000 a year and my wife and I just bought a home. I didn’t know where to turn.”

That all changed when his local veterans center referred him to the America’s Job Center of California in Victorville – one of three AJCCs operated by the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB). The support, encouragement and guidance he received from his “Angel Crew” put him on the path to success, “restored my faith in the human experience and once again proved people really do make a difference.”

Today, Lincoln works as a technology support specialist at Sultana High School in Hesperia, while pursuing a lifelong passion to teach. With degrees in business administration, criminal justice and information technology, he sees only opportunity ahead.

“I am happy to report that the plan and objectives we worked up at the AJCC totally worked,” Lincoln says.

His story is a vivid example of how lives are being transformed and hard-to-fill employment needs are being met through the efforts of the county’s three AJCCs. It also underscores the enormous potential of the nearly 100,000 veterans who call San Bernardino County home.

“We all agree that more needs to be done to help our former military personnel, who have sacrificed so much for all of us. At the same time, the talent and experience that our veterans provide is a tremendous resource for employers and our economy,” said Tony Myrell, Chairman of the Workforce Development Board. “Greg’s story is a great example of the ground work that’s done every day at our job centers to support economic growth by connecting employers with a highly qualified labor force.”

In Lincoln’s case, AJCC professionals introduced him to Troops to Teachers, a U.S. Department of Defense program that helps veterans begin new careers in education.



But it was the emotional and spiritual support that Lincoln says made the biggest difference.

“I’d started thinking something was wrong with me. I was on the verge of losing my home and no jobs were coming in,” he says. “They came in and boosted my confidence when it was at its lowest level.”

Three “angels” – veterans representatives Sam McMakin and Shelly Wolfe from the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and Christine Watson from the San Bernardino Workforce Development Department – took Lincoln under their wings, aligning his experience, skillsets and passion with potential career opportunities while helping resolve issues with his previous paycheck and unemployment benefits.

The same day he learned he had passed the California Education Credentialing Examination (CBEST) – an early step in becoming a teacher – Lincoln got the call for the technology support specialist position at Sultana High School. Within 72 hours, he was hired.

“Turns out, the position had been opened on and off for 18 months,” Lincoln says. “I’ve dabbled in computers for 30 years, so it worked out perfectly.”

McMakin, himself a Navy veteran, says ex-military personnel provide a number of advantages for employers. These include discipline, leadership and a sense of “completing the mission.” Even so, many veterans come into the job center with a sense of desperation.

“The first thing we do is reassure them that we’re here for them,” McMakin says. “In (Lincoln’s) case, we made sure he left everyday with a plan of attack (and) a mission to accomplish.”

Watson says the partnership between EDD and the Workforce Development Department creates a one-stop destination for job seekers and for employers in search of qualified workers.

“Collectively, we have a lot of resources to assist in cases like this,” she says.

Lincoln says he and his family will be forever indebted to McMakin, Wolfe, Watson and the AJCC.

“There are no words that can express my pure and total gratitude for those three people,” he says. “I had a sense that (they) really cared about what was happening to me and my family. They changed my life, my perspective and perception on government agencies and continued to provide me hope when I had none myself.”

About the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board

The San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB) is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. The WDB strives to strengthen the skills of the County’s workforce through partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations. The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is committed to

providing county resources, which generate jobs and investment in line with the [Countywide Vision](#).

The Workforce Development Board, through the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, offers a variety of programs designed to help youth and adults identify career pathways and get the appropriate training and skills. Programs funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide eligible youth, ages 16 to 24, access to a variety of career and educational services designed to help enhance job skills, develop leadership qualities, explore career options, participate in adult and peer mentoring opportunities, and take advantage of work experiences. In addition, the WDB operates San Bernardino County's three America's Job Centers of California (AJCC). The AJCCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life. The AJCCs also support and provide services to the County's businesses, including employee recruitment and business retention programs.

Employers and job seekers who are interested in the Workforce Development Board programs may call: (800) 451-JOBS or visit www.sbcounty.gov/workforce. Also follow us on: Facebook www.facebook.com/SBCountyWDB; Twitter @InlandEmpireJob; LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/sanbernardinocountywdb>; and YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/SBCountyWIB>.