

News Release



WorkNet Pinellas, Inc.
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U.S. Department of Labor Awards WorkNet Pinellas \$321,000 to Support Careers of Returning Veterans

CLEARWATER – WorkNet Pinellas announced today that it received \$321,000 from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to establish a concentrated training and employment program that will support and expedite the transition of veterans returning from active duty back into the civilian workforce.

Dubbed *SUPERVets* (Skills Upgrade Program for Employment Retention of Veterans), the program has been designed to provide on-the-job training and support services for 100 Pinellas County veterans. Special emphasis has been placed on helping veterans obtain needed certifications to work in professions where they already have applicable skills and experience but lack the state or locally required professional credentials to work in the field.

The grant will be used to support employers who commit to hiring and training recently returned veterans, many of whom will be Reserve and National Guard troops. Up to \$3,000 may be reimbursed to the employer per program participant for training, wages and fringe benefits from January through June of 2005. The funds will also cover incidental expenses of the veteran to include uniforms, safety equipment and costs of certification.

“The SUPERVets initiative will be of great value to our veterans and business community in many ways,” says Dana Rautio, SUPERVets Coordinator for WorkNet Pinellas. “It will provide local businesses with employees who have great potential to fill critical positions. It will help reduce the gap between the number of Veterans seeking employment and the number of those being hired. But most importantly, it recognizes the dedication and sacrifice of our military service members who have given their time during the prime of their productive years.”

SUPERVets exists as part of the Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP) authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and is in alignment with the President’s “Hire Vets First” campaign. The initiative will be supplemented by \$200,000 appropriated from the Omnibus Appropriations Bill passed by Congress in November, through the efforts of Congressman C.W. “Bill” Young to serve the employment needs of veterans of Pinellas County.

WorkNet Pinellas is actively seeking Pinellas County businesses who have open job opportunities and who can provide for skills upgrade or certification training, either on-the-job or offsite. For additional information, please contact Dana Rautio at (727) 524-4344 or drautio@worknetpinellas.org.

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About WorkNet Pinellas

WorkNet Pinellas is the governing Workforce Board, Region 14, for Pinellas County. WorkNet Pinellas develops strategies to target the needs of employers then matches them to job seekers across the employment spectrum, from assisting those seeking entry level positions in the workforce to cultivating workers to fill coveted high skill/high demand positions. WorkNet Pinellas is a member of the Employ Florida statewide network of workforce services and resources. To locate any of the eight Pinellas County One Stop Centers visit www.worknetpinellas.org or call (727) 524-4344.