



# Veterans Independence Day: New Tools & Solutions Launched in 12 U.S. Cities To Help Veterans Access Small Business Opportunities

Jun 19, 2012

MEDIA ADVISORY

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**WASHINGTON** — As July 4th approaches, with unemployment rates for some groups of veterans hovering over 18%, the **International Franchise Association (IFA)**, **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)** and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce **Hiring Our Heroes** initiative will launch new tools and resources June 28, 2012 in 12 cities to help veterans access opportunities in small business ownership and employment including a new free online **Veterans Franchise Toolkit** and a new **Mentor Network** to connect veterans to business leaders and jobs.

*A national launch event including IFA, VFW and business leaders will take place June 28, 2012 at 10:00 am at the National Press Club, 14th & Penn. Ave. NW, in the Murrow Room. Contact Matt Haller at [mhaller@franchise.org](mailto:mhaller@franchise.org) or (202) 662-0770 to RSVP.*

**Speakers:**

***Steve Caldeira, President & CEO, International Franchise Association***

***Kevin Schmiegel, Executive Director, Hiring our Heroes, U.S. Chamber of***

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***Jim Tatum, President, SIGN-A-RAMA***

***Rosemarie Hartnett, President and Co-Founder, Abrakadoodle, Inc.***

The [Veterans Franchise \(VetFran\) Toolkit](#) is designed to foster access to franchise employment and ownership opportunities for U.S. veterans and military spouses. The franchise industry has committed to hiring as team members and recruiting as franchise business owners 75,000 veterans and military spouses, plus 5,000 wounded warriors. Over 6,200 veterans and spouses have started careers in franchising since the campaign launched last year.

The VetFran Toolkit includes a Franchising 101 online course, a skills and attributes assessment, a finance assessment, and partner links. U.S. military veterans and spouses will also be able to access the VetFran Mentor Network and be connected to franchise business leaders through the Toolkit. The franchise leaders comprising the Mentor Network will share their knowledge of and experience in franchising with veterans in addition to any other professional guidance they are comfortable giving.

The **VetFran Mentor Network Advisory Board** will lead the volunteer network, including:

Gordon Logan, Founder & CEO, Sport Clips, Inc. (Chairman) (USAF)

Melanie Bergeron, Chair of the Board, Two Men & A Truck

Sean Collins, Vice President, GI Jobs and MilitaryFranchising.com (USN)

Jerry Darnell, Darnell & Associates (US Army)

Ted Daywalt, President & CEO, VetJobs.com (USN)

Chuck Southern, VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

Greg Tanner, National Director of Franchise Sales, Aaron's (US Army)

Mary Kennedy Thompson, President & CEO, Mr. Rooter (USMC)

Bob Wallace, Executive Director, VFW Washington Office

Skills testing firm **Caliper Corporation**, and **BoeFly**, the online finance marketplace, contributed services at no charge to power the Toolkit.

With its training, structure, systems and focus on operational excellence, franchising can provide an ideal career path for returning veterans to become leaders in the civilian economy. According to the U.S. Census, there are over 66,000 veteran-owned franchise businesses in the U.S. IFA's VetFran strategic initiative was launched in 1991 to help Gulf War veterans transition.

“As we continue to work hard each and every day to extend career opportunities to our nation's veterans, we commend our members who are participating in the VetFran Toolkit launch events and volunteering in the VetFran Mentor Network – they are setting the right example for our industry and our entire nation,” said Steve Caldeira, CFE, IFA's President & CEO. “As we celebrate Independence Day, let us remember that our freedom comes at a price. Now we need to enable our nation's veterans to fulfill their dreams and find career opportunities here at home.”

Launch events will also take place in Atlanta, Dallas, Detroit, Denver, Houston, Miami/South Florida, Nashville, Norfolk, Austin, San Diego, Tampa-St. Petersburg, and Minneapolis.

For more information, visit [www.VetFran.com](http://www.VetFran.com).