

Julianna Duso, MBA  
Director  
Veterans Business Outreach Center

Thank you for allowing me to be here today.

I would like to talk to you about my job. I have a great job! I am the Director for the Region X Veteran's Business Outreach Center and I have the great honor of serving our Country's heroes and their families. Our center serves 4 states; Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Idaho, and seven active military bases. We provide technical business assistance and training to veteran entrepreneurs and business owners, as well as members of the military community.

I could talk to you about the facts. I could tell you that our small team of two has provided over 3200 hours of free, individualized business assistance to over 1600 veterans since it's opening in 2010. This assistance covers topics such as; analyzing the feasibility of a business idea, creating a business plan, understanding and developing financial statements, creating a marketing plan, participating in contract procurement, and establishing profitable business management. We also help clients to understand funding options in starting, improving, or expanding their business, preparing loan applications, and gaining access to capital.

I could tell you how we have provided training for over 1000 individuals; ranging in topics from general management, entrepreneurial skills, and financial planning; to marketing, sales, and government contracting, among others.

I could tell you that our clients have started over 50 businesses, received over \$45M in government contracts, generated \$19M in revenue, and provided 1500 jobs throughout our 4 state region. All of these facts are important and can seem impressive.

However, I would rather tell you about the cornerstone of what I do: the people I serve and the companies they have built.

I would like to talk to you about Rich. Rich is an 8 year veteran of the Air Force and Air Force Reserves. Rich and his brother were seasoned professionals in the construction industry when it saw a drastic slowdown in activity beginning in 2007. In 2011 Rich and his brother came to us with a dream of starting a new business in an area they were both passionate, craft beer. We worked with them to develop a business plan, create a marketing plan, and develop a strong financial roadmap. They invested every nickel they had to open a brewery in the wine country of Woodinville, WA. Their company, Triplehorn Brewing Company, received a \$170K SBA 7a loan and used it to build a successful company. They finished 2013 with \$700K in gross sales and created 10 new jobs. With continued support and financial assistance from the Small Business Administration, they have plans to quadruple their production and are one the fastest growing breweries in the state. You can get a Triplehorn beer on tap at many local restaurants and bars, including Whole Foods Market. Rich has utilized the skills he learned during his

service such as organization, goal setting, problem solving, confidence, and resolve to successfully grow his business. It should also be noted that Rich and his brother are second generation small business owners. Their father was the recipient of a small business loan himself.

I would also like to talk to you about Sam. Sam is a decorated Army veteran who fought for our country in both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. During his four years in the Army, Sam received the Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal w/ Oak Leaf, Army Achievement Medal, and Good Conduct Medal, among others. Sam's company, Strideline Spokane, imports and sells a popular line of socks sporting the skyline of his hometown, Spokane, WA. In their first year of operations Strideline Spokane generated \$110K in revenue and secured contracts in 41 different retail stores projected to bring in an additional \$56,000 in top line growth in the next 6 months. Strideline Spokane employs a team that includes a graphic designer, sales associates, and events staff. Sam has the rights to the designs for Denver, Salt Lake City, and Boise, where he plans to expand his business.

I would also like to tell you about Walter. Walter founded Veterans Northwest Construction, LLC in 2009. He came to us in 2012 seeking assistance in securing prime contractor awards. We assisted Walter in the process of applying for his Center for Verification and Evaluation certification to enable him to work with the Department of Veteran Affairs as well as building a strong profile in SAM. In 2013 Walter's company received that CVE, along with a \$5M VA contract in 2014. His company, Veterans Northwest Construction LLC, also received two more prime contracting awards with a total value over \$40M. These contracts allow Walter to provide employment and security to countless others in the Oregon and Washington area, including many out of work veterans. Veterans Northwest Construction, LLC has put in bids for several more projects, including renovations to a Naval Base.

I would like to end by telling you about Janell. Janell has served her country for over 20 years. During her 14 years of active duty service Janell was deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom. Today she serves in the Army National Guard where she is an intelligence officer in the Washington Army National Guard's 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade Special Troops Battalion. In 2009 Janell was diagnosed with celiac disease. Having just returned from her service in the Army she was determined to accommodate her diet and keep herself as healthy as possible. Realizing there were limited options and tools available in reaching her goal, Janell decided to start her own business. We partnered with Janell as she completed her business plan, conducted market research, and learned how to properly budget and utilize resources. In November of that year she opened Janell's Gluten Free Market in her hometown of Everett, WA and sales have been increasing ever since. In 2013 Janell's store recognized over \$561k in top line sales. She has 5 full time employees and plans to add 4 more members to her staff in the next year. In 2013 she participated in and graduated from the V-Wise program; where she began planning for a second location. Janell's Gluten Free Market successfully launched its second store in Kirkland, WA; three years after opening her original location. We are currently working with Janell on the feasibility of a third location that could come complete with a commercial kitchen and taps flowing with gluten free beer. Janell's service to her community did not end in the Army or

National Guard. She has designed her business to serve as a resource to the celiac community and brings in doctors and other guest speakers to assist customers in finding resources for their ailments. Whether it is a gluten-free market or other business, Farnsworth advocates for all Veteran entrepreneurs to take advantage of SBA's resources. This Army Captain with 20-years of service, including a deployment to Afghanistan in 2006, emphasizes the value of classes offered by SBA and the VBOC, which guided her business decisions and helped her develop a well-grounded business plan.

These are just a few of the extraordinary individuals I have the honor of working with. I have learned through working with them that veterans possess skills that make them uniquely prepared to be savvy business owners. During their service they learn how to solve problems, work calmly under pressure, effectively utilize resources, and work tirelessly to achieve their goals. The military community is diverse. It is not limited to any specific race, gender, or age. The work we do requires us to be agile and relentless in our efforts to relate and assist this unique and growing population. With your continued support and investment, we can not only sustain the work we are doing, but grow the breadth and reach of assistance.

Thank you for allowing me to share these stories with you and for taking your time to listen to me today.