

## **NBIC News – Commemorating Labor Day and Fall 2014:**

Dear NIBIC Member,

In addition to Worklife Institute's employee assistance program ministry to several companies in Houston and as a provider for an assortment of external (800 #) EAPs, we are very busy with our Texas Veterans Transition Program. 70% of the separating troops, veterans and family members come in specifically needing assistance with finding their vocational direction and employment. It is a critical time for them because, in addition to needing income, they are concerned about exploring what has meaning for them in this next stage of their lives as well as how to transition their military occupations into the civilian world, and to find out if their current skills meet what employers want. They also have to cope with their "new normal" following combat deployments, especially with injuries including PTSD.

I assume that you have been following the national employment statistics, which state that although the unemployment rate is down, salary levels are not keeping up, some of the reduced unemployment is because more people are dropping out of the hope of finding a job, and more openings are at the bottom end of the pay scale, contract and part-time without benefits. At the same time, manufacturing and construction are booming in the U.S., with urgent need for employees in the skilled trades but currently a serious lack of qualified candidates.

***An example from this week of how this is affecting real people:*** We are working with a female veteran, single mother with three children, who in the 2.5 years since she got off deployment has been working at Wal-Mart, first in warehousing and logistics (her military job) then as a senior cashier. Her salary is still only \$7.65 an hour, and they do not schedule her for more than 35 hours a week so that they do not have to pay her benefits. Since her two Army buddy roommates have just left for jobs elsewhere, she can no longer afford her apartment.

The VA's national program to prevent homelessness is out of money in this region, so she is facing eviction this week. In addition to scrambling to locate other funding sources and room in one of the rare shelters that accept women with children, our coaching has been focusing on her finding meaningful work with a living wage. As of Friday she has been promised a good industry job, but she needs a Texas security clearance card, but the Goodwill veterans program that provides funding for the card says it takes three weeks for them to cut a check for the fee. On it goes. I am sure other NIBIC members can add your own similar stories about those you are serving. Labor Day stands for honoring the dignity of working people and opening up positive alternatives.

***Good News Resources:*** We have been finding that many people reentering the workforce are geared towards hands-on skilled trades careers, rather than going the academic route, and this is where many of the most satisfying and upwardly sustainable careers are going to be found. With online technology national programs with direct pipelines into employers are being created. Here is a sampling:

1. Unified Apprenticeships of the Construction Trades and for veterans, Helmets to Hardhats. Crafts include Sheet Metal Workers (HVAC, etc.), Steel Workers, Iron Workers, Pipefitters, Operating Engineers, Carpenters, Electrical Workers, Millwrights.

2. The Manufacturing Institute's new GetSkillsToWork online skills evaluation and connection with advanced manufacturing. Qualified candidates receive a Manufacturing Badge and are sent straight to participating employers; those needing more training are linked to a fast-track qualifying program at participating community colleges then sent on to employers.
3. Accredited community colleges are rapidly putting in fast-track workforce development trades certification programs. Most popular in the Houston area are the IT certifications, including Cisco and Microsoft credentials.

Proprietary trade schools are proliferating, much of this due to the post-9/11 GI bill that has approved them for direct tuition reimbursement for veterans. Some of these are predatory, with high expenses, substandard training and unrecognized certifications. But the upper tier of these schools have direct ties to their target industry and are the preferred hiring gateway.

Examples of good training programs that we are collaborating with are:

1. PEC Safety, Morgan City, LA, for offshore Environmental and Safety Inspectors. For veterans they are funded by the VA for their Battlefields to Oilfields program. The major energy companies, such as Shell Oil and Schlumberger, prefer to hire from their graduates.
2. UTI, Universal Technical Institute, for six types of automotive technician certifications, with direct hire by manufacturers and dealerships nationwide.
3. AIM – Aviation Institute of Maintenance, FAA\_ approved A&P School, based in Virginia Beach, VA, with multiple regional campuses and providing direct referrals to UPS, FedEx, etc.

#### **Brief NIBIC News Items for Members:**

***Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling:*** The Fall 2014 edition is now available online for access by NIBIC members. Easy instructions: go to our web site: [www.nibic.com](http://www.nibic.com). Push log in at upper right corner of the homepage. If you have not set your user name and password for the site, do so now. For members who have registered for the site, when you get to the members page, on the right-hand side you will see the link to the Journal. On its page, use option one, the automatic access option – it is a new, easier link.

***NIBIC Member Directory:*** Our Member Directory is now on-line, through the member access route (see above). If you have a change to be made, send it directly to Gregg Edwards, our web keeper: [gebedwards@yahoo.com](mailto:gebedwards@yahoo.com); 903-693-8581 (office), 409-550-3056 (cell). Greg and I updated the online Directory earlier in the summer when he was in Houston, with what you all had sent in. So go check your contact information now.

***NIBIC 2014 Dues:*** The past several years a number of long-term members have not paid their dues. We have kept in communications with those of you who are current contact information in hopes of encouraging your participation. Dave Plummer, our representative on the JPCP board, and Greg

Edwards, our Treasurer, report that as a result, NIBIC is way behind in our obligation to the JPCP, and NIBIC has been unable to reimburse your Executive Director for the required January meeting of the pastoral care leadership in Washington, D.C. We will attach the 2014 Dues notice to this newsletter.

After this edition, only those who are up to date with your fair-share dues will continue to receive direct communications. We will also have to restrict access to the NIBIC website's member resources and David will update the Journal on NIBIC membership and our assessment.

***Good Ideas for NIBIC Member linkages:*** Alison Alpert suggested two interesting ideas at the beginning of the summer to get NIBIC members into direct resource sharing with one another:

- a) Set up a discussion email list for members to join. GoogleGroups could be used.
- b) Set up a new section on our website that has member-developed resources, such as marriage services, death and funeral practices, pastoral counseling articles, all of which would have been written by NIBIC members and available for free use.

Let's have some shared discussion on all of the above. When you respond, hit "all", so that everyone is in on the idea exchange.

Wishing you the best for an energized Fall season and ministry.

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