



GOVERNOR CHRIST LAUNCHES FLORIDA VETS FIRST

Gov. Charlie Crist recently launched Florida Vets First to better meet the needs of veterans returning to Florida after deployment and upon leaving military service. Veterans, to include Florida National Guard members returning to Florida after a deployment, now have a new tool to help ease the transition back into civilian life. Florida Vets First is a comprehensive clearinghouse for the many key services available to veterans and their families and that links vets to critical services.

The Web site, a collaboration of the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, and Workforce Florida, Inc., acts as online index to helpful organizations.

Veterans, service members and their families who need employment, health, housing and other services can visit www.FloridaVetsFirst.com and find many of the services online that used to require hours of paperwork.

Joining the governor for the announcement were representatives from each military branch, representatives from the Florida Legislation, Agency for Workforce Innovation, and Workforce Florida, Inc.



Kristine Shook represented the Workforce Development Board of Okaloosa and Walton Counties at the Capitol for the announcement of Florida Vets First.



After 28 years of military reserve and active duty service, Kristine Shook utilized the Veterans Services programs provided by the *JobsPlus* One-Stop Career Center and now has a successful career and continues to participate as a preferred veteran's employer and volunteer in the Veteran's Services programs.

In 2002, Kristine Shook, originally from Fort Walton Beach, was a Marine Corps reservist called to active duty. When her four years of active duty ended 2006 she decided to retire from the military. Although she was stationed at New Orleans NAS

Joint Reserve Base she was able to attend the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) class at Hurlburt Field in order to transition back to the Fort Walton Beach area and continue her career near her home and family.

After completing TAP, Kristine continued her job search by utilizing the services she learned about in the TAP class at the *JobsPlus* One-Stop Career Center in Fort Walton Beach. Starting with resume review and updating services and eventually joining the Professional Placement Network (PPN). “What a great opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and the guest speakers were the best,” Kristine said about the PPN program. She also was able to participate in a preparation class for a Human Resources professional certification offered at the *JobsPlus* Center to build on her dated civilian experience in the Human Resources field.

After seven months of job searching, skills development and networking Kristine attended the *JobsPlus* sponsored Panhandle Job Fair, where she was able to connect with her current employer, WinTec Arrowmaker, Inc. “The position (Program Analyst III) was at Hurlburt Field, near my home (6 mile commute one-way), the pay is great and it was what I was seeking,” Kristine commented on her current employment situation.

Now that Kristine has her career on track, she continues to help others during the same transition phase of their career by volunteering as one of the civilian employers on the Reality 101 panel in the TAP classes. The Reality 101 panel gives participants a real employer’s perspective on what they are looking for in qualified applicants. “On this panel,” Kristine added, “I recollect seven months of unemployment, the trials and tribulations of the job hunt, handling finances, and how *JobsPlus* Veterans Services advised and supported me.”



Also attending the Florida Vets First at the Capitol: (From left to right)

Shawn Forehand, State Veterans’ Program Coordinator; Director Monesia T. Brown, Agency for Workforce Innovation; Kristine Shook, WinTec Arrowmaker, Inc.; Robert Vanden Berg, Okaloosa/Walton Veteran Employment Services & Employer Services; Jerry McDaniel Okaloosa/Walton Local Veterans Employment Representative; Linda Sumblin (not in picture), Workforce Development Board of Okaloosa and Walton Counties