

## **MN Helmets to Hardhats Initiative**

### **Progress report**

**01-1-2023 – 12-31-2023**

#### **Director's Overview**

Justin Rost a Sheetmetal worker and U.S. Marine Corps veteran continued as Director of the MN Helmets to Hardhats program.

CCF, a nonprofit organization, is dedicated to fostering and developing construction career pathways for Minnesotans, especially young adults. Working in tandem with the national office of Helmets to Hardhats, a national nonprofit organization that helps introduce military veterans to career opportunities in construction, CCF built a program, supported by a two-year grant totaling \$400,000, approved during the 2017 session of the Minnesota Legislature, to recruit, retain, assist and support National Guard, Reserve, and active duty military members' and veterans' participation in construction trades apprenticeship programs registered with the MN Department of Labor and Industry (MNDOLI). Activities under the grant, monitored by MNDOLI, include connecting active members and veterans with career training and employment opportunities in the building and construction trades industries.

During the 2021 legislation MN Helmets to Hardhats was granted an additional two years of funding totaling \$450,000 to continue its mission. Helmets to Hardhats is a national, nonprofit organization that connects National Guard, Reserve, retired and transitioning active-duty military service members with skilled training and quality career opportunities in the construction industry ([helmetstohardhats.org](http://helmetstohardhats.org)). Such training is offered by apprenticeship training organizations and because these apprenticeship programs are regulated and approved at both federal and state levels, veterans can utilize their Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits to supplement their income while they are learning valuable skills and on-the-job training.

Like 2019 and 2020, 2022 has continued to challenge the MN H2H program. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic we saw many changes to how we could conduct business, provide outreach, network, and engage with the veteran community as well as a significant decline in sign-ups and placements. Although we were able to maintain relationships and partnerships that we had fostered in the past, we saw many limitations to our outreach this year which has proven to be an important factor in this program's success.

#### **Program Overview**

MN Helmets to Hardhats Commitment Statements:

- To provide services in accordance with our own standard as well as the standards of the national office to any and all veterans that have honorably served or are currently serving in the military forces of the United States.
- To help veterans in need of other services through use of our contacts and networking partners.
- To continue to expand our contacts and partnerships of veteran service providers, union building trades, and veterans throughout the state.
- To help military service members successfully transition back into civilian life by offering them the means to secure a quality career in the construction industry.

The purpose of the MN Helmets to Hardhats program is to help veterans and transitioning military along with National Guard and Reserve personnel find gainful employment in the union construction trades in Minnesota. This is accomplished by:

- Partnering with the National Helmets to Hardhats program to allow veterans access to an established website that is actively advertised throughout the country and military bases.
- Partnering with other veteran organizations like the VA Hospital, MAC-V, and DEED along with many others to help veterans who may be unemployed or underemployed.
- Networking with veteran support groups such as the Eagle Group of MN Veterans, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, and the veteran Resource Group.
- Connecting with the MN Building Union Trades and their joint apprenticeship training coordinators and business agents.
- Networking with employers

## Processes

To join Helmets to Hardhats, a veteran will go to the national website ([helmetstohardhats.org](http://helmetstohardhats.org)), create a profile and submit a resume. Once registered, the MN Helmets to Hardhats Director contacts the individual directly to help navigate towards a career pathway within the construction industry. Participating veterans must have the following:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have an honorable discharge
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent

- Be able to pass a drug test
- Be able to complete a formal interview

## Results

Here are the comparison results for the program's fourth year of operation.

### Comparison statistics – November 2021 through November 2022:

45 - Known Successful Transitions (KST's are veterans that have completed entry paperwork and have been accepted into a union and has received employment.)

\*Some trades have not reported numbers yet, so we do expect this number to increase.

### Comparison Analysis

	<u>Dec. 2021 – Dec. 2022</u>	<u>Jan. 1, 2023 – Dec. 31, 2023</u>
Enrolled MN veterans with the National Helmets to Hardhats program who are receiving support.	104	194
MN Veteran participation (registered with the MN Department of Labor and Industry)		
• Active veteran apprentices – all industries	704	659
• Active veteran apprentices – construction industry	700	560
• Veteran Unemployment rate-	2.7	3.2
• Male/Female	M-679/F-25	M-632/F-27

## Mental Health

MNH2H continues to focus on the mental health crisis that plagues our service members by providing resources and contacts for mental health professionals to employers, service members, and apprenticeship coordinators throughout the state. I was fortunate to be part of a

leadership team that created a mental health and suicide prevention toolbox for community leaders, employers, and friends and family of service members which helps them understand what service members may be going through, what the signs and symptoms may be, how to properly communicate with them, and what resources are available for these types of situations. This project was overseen by a Minneapolis VA mental health nurse and is being reviewed for nationwide use through the VA system. I have also given the afore mentioned groups the H2H Guidebook to Mental Health and am proud to say this has resulted in helping multiple veteran apprentices get help they desperately needed.

### **Impact**

Since being created the Minnesota Helmets to Hardhats program has had more than 1,200 service members enrolled in the program, with nearly 230 of those individuals placed in construction careers through registered apprenticeship. This ratio is higher than any other state for placement through a Helmets to Hardhats program. Overall MN ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the H2H national program for placements despite having a much lower population than the top 5 states.