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Secretary Newson Congratulates 14 Veterans on Completing Veterans in Piping Training, Third Group of Graduates in Pre-Apprenticeship Initiative

MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today congratulated 14 veterans who completed accelerated training in welding at Camp Williams, the third graduating class in a pioneering Veterans in Piping (VIP) initiative to create job opportunities for veterans.

"In partnership with the piping industry, we are training veterans for good jobs and rewarding careers," Secretary Newson said. "Like the graduates before them, these veterans are well on their way to becoming full-fledged participants in Wisconsin's model apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship is on-the-job training at its best, and this is our way of thanking them for serving our country."

The VIP initiative is a collaborative effort involving DWD, the Wisconsin National Guard and the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting and Sprinkler Fitting Industry. The United Association (UA) is providing the instructors and training at no cost, and the National Guard is providing the training site.

Wisconsin became the first state in the Midwest to partner with the United Association in January of 2011 when training began at Camp Williams in Juneau County. In addition to veterans, the training at Camp Williams is being offered to former and current National Guard and Reserve military personnel in Wisconsin and from other Midwest states.

Veterans receive 20 weeks of pre-apprenticeship training in welding. All who complete training and succeed in earning two national welding certificates have second-year standing in the Wisconsin Apprenticeship Program. In addition, the national association is guaranteeing jobs to course graduates as they continue apprenticeship training and work to achieve journeyworker status.

Wisconsin's plumbing, steamfitter and sprinklerfitter apprenticeships require five years of training to achieve journeyworker status. During that time, apprentices earn a wage while learning skills. With experience, the average journeyworker wage is about \$33 per hour or more than \$68,000 per year, plus benefits.

The United Association first began VIP training in Washington State under a 2008 agreement with the state National Guard. The only other VIP program was at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base in California.

A graduation ceremony for the third class of 14 graduates was held Thursday at Fireman's Park in Tomah. In all, 39 veterans have now completed VIP training.

For more information about the initiative:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Veterans-in-Piping-Wisconsin/161646387213473> or <http://www.uavip.org/>

About other DWD services for veterans: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/veterans/>

About the Wisconsin apprenticeship program: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>