

JULY 15, 2024

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## HIRING HEROES

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Nevada Department of Veterans Services' Education and Employment Manager, Amanda Kehrer, representing Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, presented the certificate of recognition in a ceremony held at Suburban Propane's Customer Service Center (CSC) in Las Vegas, Nevada.



# HIRING HEROES

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Active-duty troops transitioning to civilian life often face many employment challenges, as prospective employers may not understand or value prior military service. One publicly-traded energy powerhouse, Suburban Propane Partners, not only appreciates military experience, but the company is also actively recruiting and supporting veterans seeking employment through its award-winning "Heroes Hired Here" program.

"At Suburban Propane, we are deeply grateful for the service and sacrifice of military personnel and their families," explains Michael Stivala, president and chief executive of Suburban Propane. "Their commitment to protecting our nation embodies the values of service, integrity, and dedication that we strive to uphold in our daily work. Our veterans' hiring programs are an essential part of our mission to meaningfully expand and diversify our workforce, and as a domestic energy brand, hiring veterans is a win-win situation. We get to support those who dedicated their lives to protecting our country while hiring the best, most qualified people for the job. We are proud to work alongside hundreds of veterans across the country and feel their contributions to our company are invaluable.

"The goal of our 'Heroes Hired Here' program has always been to encourage veterans to join our workforce and to build external partnerships with organizations that share our commitment to supporting the employment of veterans across the country," he adds. "At Suburban Propane, we know that



Ron LaSane, Propane Service Technician

our strength comes from our diverse and inclusive team of employees who make a difference in the communities we serve across the country every day. From our perspective as an employer, it's easy to see that veterans inherently possess the dedication, managerial, and service-oriented skills and qualifications we look for in employees."

Suburban Propane, headquartered in Whippany, NJ, is a nationwide distributor of propane, renewable propane, renewable natural gas, fuel oil, and related products and services, as well as a marketer of natural gas and electricity and investor in low carbon fuel alternatives. The company services the energy needs of approximately 1 million

customers through approximately 700 locations in 42 states. Suburban Propane is also an investor in Independence Hydrogen, a privately held company that is a pioneer in building the American hydrogen economy. Based in Ashburn, VA, Independence Hydrogen's team is 100% veterans from military and government service, many with combat leadership experience. The IH initiative is part of Suburban Propane's larger \$200 million investment in renewable energy.

The 95-year-old firm started the Heroes Hired Here program in 2017 as a way to both diversify its employee population and support active military personnel, veterans, and their families. "When their time as part of the military comes to a close, many veterans aren't necessarily aware of the types of careers that are best suited to them based on the skills and values

that they developed while in the military" Stivala points out. "It can feel like they are starting from scratch and they may not have any idea how to step into a completely new vocation - how to join a corporation and start advancing. Our Heroes Hired Here program is designed to give veterans a leg up in this process by providing benefits like payment of CDL and endorsement fees, and Reservist Training Compensation for up to three weeks of standard working hours. Heroes Hired Here also includes a Veteran Buddy Program, where existing veteran employees are partnered with newly hired employees to assist them with their transition to life at Suburban Propane. We also provide a military relocation allowance of \$2,500 to





Casey Sulton, Service Manager

cover some of the expenses of employees relocating 50 miles or more."

The program has garnered numerous awards and accolades: Most recently, the company was named a distinguished employer within the Nevada Department of Veterans' Services Patriot Employer Program; veterans comprise 14.7% of Suburban Propane's Nevada workforce. In 2023, Suburban Propane was ranked among the top 30 companies on *Military Time's* Best for Vets Employers list. Suburban Propane also has been honored by the Texas Workforce Commission, the South Carolina Department of Veterans Services, the Michigan Veterans Affairs Association, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, and the American Legion of New Jersey. The company has also been featured on *Lifetime TV's* "Military Make-over" twice.

"Suburban Propane always strives to support active military service members, as well as our veterans through direct opportunities like job fairs at veteran locations, and support of military and veteran organizations through our SuburbanCares charitable initiative," Stivala explains. "Through this cornerstone of our company, we have collaborated with veterans' organizations across the country including: Forgotten Soldiers Outreach in Lake Worth, FL; Veterans Bridge

Home in Charlotte, NC; Move America Forward in Sacramento, CA; and Operation Adopt a Soldier in Saratoga, NY, to name a few.

"Involvement with external veterans' organizations is crucial to our mission, as it allows us to extend our support beyond our company and into the communities within our 42-state footprint," he continues. "By partnering with these organizations, we address a wider range of needs that veterans may have, from mental health support to reintegration into civilian life. This involvement ensures that we make a meaningful impact in the lives of those who have served our country. Furthermore, these collaborations enable us to contribute to the community in diverse ways, such as providing resources, organizing events, and offering volunteer opportunities for our employees. This holistic approach reinforces our commitment to the military community and highlights our commitment to service—not just in business, but in giving back to those who have given so much. By actively participating in these partnerships, we help create a supportive network for veterans, ensuring they receive the recognition, opportunities, and assistance they deserve."

Suburban Propane leverages its military partnerships to get the word out about Heroes Hired Here. The company works with state veteran services departments as


well as with the U.S. Department of Defense's SkillBridge program (**featured in the Summer 2024 issue of SALUTE**) and the U.S. Army through the Partnership For Your Success (PaYS) program, which pairs service members who are transitioning out of the military with civilian employment opportunities.

"In the future, we aim to expand our collaborations with veterans' organizations across the communities in which we operate and beyond, increasing support through additional partnerships and community engagement," Stivala asserts. "We continue our SuburbanCares initiative by partnering with organizations that support the needs of veterans and their families. Additionally, we are committed to ensuring our veteran employees have the resources and support

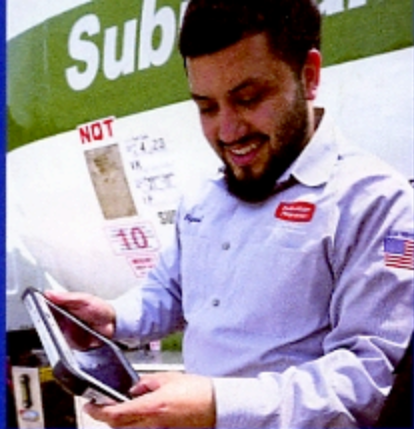


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needed to thrive in their new roles.

"Our goal is to create a workplace environment where veterans feel valued and can leverage their skills to build successful, long-term careers with Suburban Propane," he adds. "Through these efforts, we strive to deepen our impact and reaffirm our dedication to serving those who have served our country." 





Left: Miguel Escobar-Sanchez, Delivery Driver. Right: Bradley Doney, Propane Service Technician II

## In Their Own Words

Veterans themselves make the strongest case for Suburban Propane's commitment to military employment. Here are a few of the company's current employees discussing their experiences:

- Suburban Propane's commitment to the employment of veterans is the reason that I decided to join the team. I am so thankful every day that Suburban Propane has given me the opportunity to use the skills that I learned in the military and show the value that a veteran can bring to a company. As a Talent Acquisition Partner, I get to achieve my goal of giving back to other veterans by helping them find a rewarding career with a company that values their service and all of the skills and strengths they developed while serving our country. — **Josh Santiago, Talent Acquisition Partner**
- Suburban Propane was the first company that hired me as I was transitioning from active-duty military to retirement. The support that I received from Suburban Propane during that transition has significantly contributed to my professional and personal growth. Working for Suburban Propane has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the energy sector and boosted my career trajectory. The company's commitment to safety and customer satisfaction has instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility and attention to detail. The supportive work environment and opportunities for continuous learning have fostered my personal development by helping me build resilience, confidence, and a strong work ethic which aligns with what the Army instilled in me. Overall, Suburban Propane has been instrumental in shaping my professional path and personal growth. — **Casey Sutton, Service Manager**
- After leaving the Marines, I found myself unemployed and going from the top of my career in the military to just a regular civilian. I picked Suburban Propane over other companies because I think that they saw the value in my foundation of leadership and also my military experience and skills. I think it's been a really good fit not only for the company, but also for me and my family over the years. Being a veteran working at Suburban Propane is a really good feeling because you know that this company values your experience, your service and your training. When I think about Suburban Propane and the impact that we have on our country, it feels really good to work for a company that values veterans and really sees the value in our military service and training. — **Norman Fearrington, General Manager**
- As a father of a child that is an officer in the U.S. Airforce, I am concerned about veterans and I want to make sure that we treat them as well as we possibly can. They protected our country, they put their lives on the line for us every day, and I want to make sure that we do our very best for them here at Suburban Propane. — **Ken Pittam, General Manager**