

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

84 to Graduate from Joint Base San Antonio Career Skills Training Program with New Lease on Life

Many graduates of the Onward to Opportunity career training and certification program receive job offers from top companies such as Amazon, USAA and Accenture Federal Services before they leave the military.

SAN ANTONIO, T.X., (Jan. 16, 2017) – Eighty-four service members and military spouses from [Joint Base San Antonio](#) (JBSA) will start 2017 on a high note as they celebrate the completion of the Onward to Opportunity (O2O) career skills training program with a graduation ceremony, and for many graduates, a new job. The graduates will be recognized on Tuesday, January 17, at JBSA by the [Schultz Family Foundation \(SFF\)](#) and the [Institute for Veterans and Military Families \(IVMF\)](#) at Syracuse University.

WHEN: Tuesday, January 17, 2017

TIME: 9 A.M. Central Standard Time

WHERE: Joint Base San Antonio
Military and Family Readiness Center
3060 Stanley Road, Building 2797
Fort Sam Houston, Texas 78234

Over the next five years, more than 1 million military service members and military families will transition from military to civilian life. For many, finding employment will be the most challenging aspect of their transition. Launched at JBSA in February 2016, Onward to Opportunity was developed by the IVMF and is unique in that it provides job training for transitioning service members and spouses at the installation, before they separate from the military. The program often builds on skills and experience gained in the military, putting graduates on strong footing as they re-enter civilian life and minimizing potentially long periods of job-hunting and unemployment.

As the newest graduates of the Onward to Opportunity program, the 67 transitioning service members and 17 military spouses have completed a combination of classroom and online training in the areas of customer service excellence and information technology and, as a result, have earned industry-recognized credentials and certifications associated with their field of study. These certifications are exactly what can make the difference for program participants and employers alike according to Darlene Taylor, U.S. Army retired Command Sgt. Maj., “I looked at this as an opportunity to re-establish and re-

hone my skills for the private sector. Soldiers have diverse knowledge and the Army trains us well but sometimes what we're missing are the certifications.”

Onward to Opportunity partners with leading veteran service organizations and private sector companies to identify employers committed to training and hiring veterans and military spouses. These employer-partners assist in curriculum design, interact with participants as they progress through the program and commit to interview opportunities within their company for graduates.

Prior to graduation some program participants have already landed positions with companies such as Amazon, Accenture Federal Services, Tyson Foods and USAA. U.S. Army Sgt. Chad Strickfaden, is one of these graduates. He accepted an offer from Booz Allen Hamilton where he's just beginning a career as a senior network intelligence analyst.

Serafina De Los Santos, Executive Director 502nd Force Support Group at JBSA is credited as the driving force behind bringing Onward to Opportunity to the installation. “I am thrilled at the continued success of Onward to Opportunity at JBSA. It is a testament to the generosity and commitment of the Schultz Family Foundation to our transitioning service members. To date a combined total of over 140 transitioning service members and/or family members have taken advantage of this great program to transition with excellence,” says De Los Santos.

“Our congratulations go out to this talented graduating class,” said Daniel Pitasky, executive director of the Schultz Family Foundation. “Their success is a result of their dedication combined with the skills and experience they gained in the military. Increasingly, employers are recognizing the unique value veterans bring to the workplace, making the transition back into civilian life easier. We're proud to support Onward to Opportunity.”

“Together with our local partners we are honored to deepen our investment in the San Antonio community through this and other IVMF programs,” said IVMF Chief Operating Officer, Maureen Casey. “Onward to Opportunity by its design, with committed employer partners, is changing how the private sector engages and supports our service members and their families through the critical period of transition to civilian life.”

For more information visit the Onward to Opportunity [website](#).

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About Onward to Opportunity

Onward to Opportunity is a cost-free (with no use of GI Bill benefits) industry-focused career skills program that connects transitioning service members, active duty military spouses, and members of the National Guard and Reserve to high-demand careers in customer service and information technology. Delivered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University and supported by the Schultz Family Foundation, Onward to Opportunity partners with leading veteran service organizations and private sector companies to connect transitioning service members, military spouses and veterans with meaningful employment opportunities at companies across the country. For more information, visit onward2opportunity.org and follow the Onward to Opportunity on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the Schultz Family Foundation

The Schultz Family Foundation was co-founded in 1996 by Sheri Kersch Schultz and her husband Howard Schultz, chairman and ceo of Starbucks Coffee Company. Guided by a belief that an “inequality of opportunity” is stifling America’s potential, the Foundation invests in innovative programs and partnerships that unlock human potential, remove barriers to success and create new pathways to opportunity for important populations. The Schultz Family Foundation currently supports two national signature initiatives: Onward Youth and Onward Veterans. For more information, visit schultzfamilyfoundation.org or follow us on Twitter [@SchultzFamilyFd](#).

About the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first interdisciplinary national institute in higher education focused on the social, economic, education and policy issues impacting veterans and their families post-service. The Institute is supported by a world-class advisory board and public and private partners committed to advancing the post-service lives of America’s service members, veterans and their families. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families and its professional staff deliver leading programs in career, vocational and entrepreneurship education and training. The Institute also conducts actionable research, policy analysis and program evaluations, coordinates comprehensive collective impact strategies, and works with communities and non-profits to enhance service delivery for veterans and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu and follow the IVMF on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).