



Contact:
Marie Groark
Schultz Family Foundation
mgroark@schultzfamilyfoundation.org
917-280-2692

Bunker Labs Launches Bunker Connect in 12 Cities Nationwide to Boost Veterans' Career Opportunities

Bunker Connect is a new mentoring program between Bunker Labs and the Schultz Family Foundation that expects to create meaningful connections for more than 1,500 veterans in 12 cities

CHICAGO (October 30, 2019) – Today, Bunker Labs and the Schultz Family Foundation launched the Bunker Connect program in Chicago, one of 12 such sites that will open around the country by mid-2020. Bunker Connect aims to foster a community of mentorship for service members, veterans and military spouses to successfully navigate professional and personal transitions. Part intentional networking, part mentorship working session, Bunker Connect facilitates powerful new connections between participants and leaders from Veteran Resource Groups, Veteran Service Organizations and Corporate Affinity Groups. Bunker Connect expects to connect veterans with more than 65 partner organizations and companies leading to more than 1,500 impactful mentorship connections in the first year of the program alone.

Every year, more than 200,000 veterans transition out of the military. In an era of an all-volunteer force, with fewer than 1% of Americans choosing to serve in the military, the transition from the military to civilian world can be confusing and isolating for veterans and their families. In a [2019 study by the Pew Research Center](#), nearly half of post-9/11 veterans said that adjusting to civilian life after military service was difficult, including 54% of enlisted personnel.

Bunker Labs is a national nonprofit organization with the mission of empowering members of the military community to start and grow businesses. Founded in 2014 in Chicago, Bunker Labs has expanded to support veteran entrepreneurs through local chapters in 26 cities. Since then, Bunker Labs has developed a multi-stage program model; hosted thousands of veterans and businesses leaders at conferences, pitch competitions, and networking events; and built a national network of mentors and subject matter experts who support veteran entrepreneurs to grow their businesses in-person and online. The Bunker Connect program will leverage these networks to provide facilitated mentorship connections and resources to even more members of the military community, including both entrepreneurs and those not pursuing entrepreneurship.

“Like everyone, veterans can benefit from connecting with people who can help them navigate transitions and to successfully build on their military experience to advance their careers,” said Daniel Pitasky, executive director of the Schultz Family Foundation. “We are excited to launch this program with Bunker Labs, which has a powerful track record of demonstrating the power of connection and community to boost employment opportunities for transitioning service members.”

Bunker Connect will serve as a hub for members of the military community to connect with mentors and resources to solve career and business challenges. Veterans and military spouses will be able to access professional development opportunities, create meaningful connections to community partners and local employee resources groups, and identify resources to support their growth. In addition to quarterly in person events, Bunker Labs has also teamed up with Veterati, an online mentorship platform to connect veterans with

mentors for free. Ultimately, program participants will be better equipped to understand and navigate personal and professional opportunities available to them after their period of service.

“The Bunker is excited to grow our impact by piloting Bunker Connect over the next year,” said Todd Connor, chief executive officer and founder of Bunker Labs. “The Schultz Family Foundation’s support of this new program will empower Bunker Labs to support thousands more veterans and military spouses through our ecosystem and ultimately lead to broader and ever-increasing impact as these individuals build their networks and pursue fulfilling professional opportunities.”

A Raleigh veteran stated after the September 26 Bunker Connect, “[Bunker Connect] got me out of my comfort zone. I need more of this. I’m already excited for the next event.”

This fall, Bunker Labs will host Bunker Connect events in Raleigh-Durham, Seattle, Austin, Detroit, and Boston. Over the next six months, Bunker Labs expects to launch the program in the following cities: Minneapolis, Nashville, New York, Phoenix, Portland and Tampa.

To learn more about how to support or participate in Bunker Connect, go to www.bunkerlabs.org/our-programs/bunker-connect.

###

About Bunker Labs

Bunker Labs is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Chicago, with chapters in 25+ cities, built by military veteran entrepreneurs to empower other military veterans to start and grow businesses. Through local chapters organized in cities across the U.S., Bunker Labs provides educational programming, mentors, events, and thriving local networks to help military veterans succeed and thrive as entrepreneurs and innovators. Visit bunkerlabs.org for more information.

About Schultz Family Foundation

The Schultz Family Foundation, established in 1996 by Sheri and Howard Schultz, aims to unlock America’s potential, one individual and one community at a time. Investing in innovative, scalable solutions and partnerships, the Foundation works to close the growing opportunity gap for communities with enormous promise, including the 3.8 million post-9/11 veterans and approximately 200,000 service members who transition from active duty to civilian life each year. Through its Veterans Initiative, the Foundation focuses on ensuring the transition experience is as seamless and successful as possible for service members and provides employment support for military spouses, National Guard, and Reservists. These investments enhance and accelerate employment opportunities through training and career placement programs and coordinated access to services. Visit SchultzFamilyFoundation.org for more information.