

“You’re so used to having a support system. It’s like you’re in a group of friends and then it’s just you.”

Orel Jackson, 50, a former Air Force member on how tough the first year was out of the service



CARLINE JEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

U.S. Army veteran Orel Jackson of Boca Raton talks to Tom Murphy during a workshop where veterans work with mentors at Florida Atlantic University. The program helps veterans find jobs once they leave the service.

Program gives veterans tools for civilian job hunting

BY MARCIA HEROUX POUNDS
Staff writer

They came out of the Army, Marines, Air Force and Navy more skilled than they went in, and many thought employers would welcome them with a job.

But local veterans, many of whom served in Iraq and Afghanistan, instead found they didn't know how to translate their work in the military to what employers were seeking.

Now, with the help of Edge4Vets, a program that gives veterans the tools they need to pursue a civilian career, they feel more prepared.

“The program has made me a lot more confident,” said Zachary Morgan, 25, who got out of the Army a year ago after four years of service. The Coral Springs resident is now studying supply chain management at Broward College.

After talking with program mentors from employers that include Carnival Corp. and Bank of America, Morgan said he's not so anxious on a

job interview now.

About 20 veterans completed the final workshop by Edge4Vets this past week at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. With the help of Broward County's Mission United, a new workshop series will begin on Feb. 25.

And the program has a new incentive: a guaranteed interview by Carnival Corp. when a veteran completes the program, submits a resume and matches a current opening.

“When they invest in identifying their strengths, we invest in them to apply it,” said Tom Murphy, who organized and led the three workshops that began last fall.

John Harshaw, vice president for Carnival Corp. in Miami, the parent of Carnival Cruise Lines, said he and many of Carnival's top executives are veterans, so they understand the transition former military members are undergoing.

Veterans “come back and they're not used to marketing themselves,” he said.

At Carnival, “we're going to point them to a job listing if there's a job match. And we will set up an interview for them to come here,” Harshaw said.

Murphy said he hopes to get other employers to participate in the workshops and make similar offers for interviews to veterans who complete the program.

Orel Jackson, 50, who was in the Air Force, said the first year out of service was tough. “You're so used to having a support system. It's like you're in a group of friends and then it's just you.”

But he's finding employer attitudes different from when he left the service. “They are eager to learn what the mindset of the veteran is and how they could capitalize on that.”

For more information on the workshops, go to Edge4vets.org or contact Dylan Reyes-Cairo at dreyescairo@fau.edu

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