



FROM THE MILITARY TO THE PIPE TRADES

Kaukauna, WI (November 11, 2020) – The United Association’s Veterans in Piping (VIP) Program offers veterans like UA 400 steamfitter James Buhrow apprenticeship opportunities that lead to lifelong careers in the pipe trades.

When returning from serving in the military, it can be challenging to transition back to normalcy. Many skilled and disciplined veterans enjoy working with their hands and the training they receive in the military allows them to adapt well to detail-oriented pipe trades such as pipefitting, fabrication, plumbing and HVAC. There are no costs to veterans for the VIP training program.

"UA 400 is proud of the partnership with the UA and the Wisconsin Pipe Trades Association, to help create a pipeline to success for our veterans returning from their service to our country," said Trevor Martin, UA 400 Business Manager. "A career in the pipe trades dovetails perfectly with the unique skillset of a returning veteran. Providing these opportunities is UA 400's way of saying THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!"

Buhrow enlisted in the Army after graduating from Weyauwega-Fremont High School in 1996. He spent four years in active duty as an infantryman and transferred into the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 2000 serving until 2007. In 2010 after a break in service, he rejoined the Army Reserve as a drill sergeant and continues to serve today with a total of 21 years of service.

After graduating from the VIP Program in 2016, Buhrow joined UA 400 in 2017. Prior to that, Buhrow received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business from Cardinal Stritch University and an Associate of Applied Science in Industrial Welding and Fabrication from Fox Valley Technical College.

"In the '90's, there was a heavy push for high school kids to go to college," Buhrow said. "My generation was sold a bill of goods that you had to go to college in order to be successful (which is of course total nonsense), but ultimately I went anyway. I welded in shops to help put myself through school and was amazed to find that many of the jobs that I was applying for out of college paid much lower wages than I was making as a welder."

For many veterans leaving the military, college is no longer attractive with student loan debt soaring to \$1.5 trillion. Many for-profit colleges target veterans, leaving them with debt, poor job prospects and useless degrees. Meanwhile, pipe trades apprentices earn while they learn and costs drastically less than a college degree.

"I love the versatility of it (the pipe trades)," Buhrow said. "I get to build, service and repair some really cool systems. There is so much to it that every day is different than the day before. It never gets monotonous."

Veterans don't want to find *just* a job, but the *right* job. One-third of veterans are underemployed or overqualified for their jobs, and 44 percent left their first post-military job within one year, citing a lack of purpose or inability to utilize their skills



“I am a Steamfitter. I like to know how things work,” Buhrow said. “As a fitter, I get to work on a wide variety of different things. Steam, hydronic heating and cooling, refrigeration, gas piping, process pipe systems and several others give me a wide variety of opportunity, there is always something new to learn.”

The VIP Program was implemented to recruit veterans to help address the shortage of pipe trades labor and the underemployment of veterans. Veterans have leadership, organizational and decision-making experience and are hard-working and adaptable. They’re unafraid to speak up when there’s a problem and understand responsibility and teamwork. These are the attributes that contractors need and the VIP Program can help veterans preparing to leave the military with their transition to a lifelong career in the pipe trades industry.

“I really enjoy the comradery, it’s such an important part of being a soldier,” said Buhrow. “When we leave the service, it is the biggest thing that most veterans miss. You’ll see people that you worked with years ago on other jobs and pick up right where you left off with confidence that they are a professional in their trade and that the job is going to get done.”

Problem-solving and independent thinking are invaluable skills that veterans bring with them, which makes them uniquely suited to successful careers in the pipe trades.

“Probably the single biggest piece of advice I could give is veterans are wired differently than most people,” Buhrow said. “We have been drilled to improvise, adapt and overcome to accomplish the mission and seek the next task. Veterans have a go-go mentality that relies on snap judgements and rapid execution. It does take us a hot minute to retrain ourselves to pause, take in the whole picture and make deliberate decisions as opposed to snap judgements. We are highly adaptable. We have lived and breathed service. Once we make that transition, you will have one of the most loyal and dedicated workers you’ve ever had.”

If you’re a veteran and considering your next career move, the pipe trades is one industry you should seriously think about. It offers job security, great salary, benefits, pension and opportunities for career advancement. For more information on the VIP Program, visit <https://bit.ly/2JND73k>

About UA 400 Pipe Trades

The UA 400 Pipe Trades, headquartered in Kaukauna, Wisconsin with an office in Fond du Lac, is comprised of approximately 2,300 members serving eighteen counties in Northeast Wisconsin. The organization is affiliated with the United Association of Plumber and Pipefitters with an estimated 345,000 membership throughout the United States and Canada. The group’s mission is to be the preferred choice for industries, employers and workers specializing in plumbing, pipefitting, HVACR service and pipe fabrication as well as training for its members and qualified manpower to their 95 signatory contractors. The group’s membership serves eighteen counties in Northeast Wisconsin including Adams, Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menomonee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago. The UA 400 takes pride in their partnerships and contributions to serve local communities with organizations such as Cerebral Palsy Telethon, Special Olympics, Rebuilding Together, Heat’s On Program, Harbor House and Salvation Army. For more information, visit UA 400 and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

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