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Local Veterans to Weatherize 50+ Military Homes Through “Veterans Green Jobs” Initiative

This Labor Day, Veterans, Labor and Environmental Groups Unite to Create Job Opportunities for Veterans, Save Energy for Local Military Families and Protect the Environment

Arlington, VA (September 2, 2010) – This Labor Day, Veterans Green Jobs (VGJ) – a non-profit organization dedicated to putting veterans to work in the emerging green economy – has joined forces with the [Laborers International Union of North America](#), [Sierra Club](#), [WeatherizeDC](#) and a local home performance business named [Ardent360](#) to help local veterans, create family-supporting jobs and protect the environment.

Through a project called the Military Housing Energy Efficiency Project (MHEEP), the coalition – consisting of partners from the veterans, labor, business and environmental community – has created a pilot program to train and employ nine local veterans to provide energy audits and weatherization services at no cost to 50 military households in northern Virginia.

“At a time when America is at war, unemployment is at historic levels, and utility bills are soaring, this program is helping veterans *and* military families,” said Zack Bazzi, VGJ Director of Mid-Atlantic Programs. “The partners in this coalition – who, let’s face it, don’t usually work together – are partnering to help improve the Virginia economy and address the needs of those who have served their country and sacrificed the most. We’re providing career opportunities for veterans and helping military families save money on their energy bills.”

This Labor Day comes in the middle of a difficult year for American workers, and particularly for veterans who are facing historically high unemployment. Some reports estimate that male veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 are experiencing an unemployment rate as high as 21.6 percent – higher than the rate for male non-veterans of that age, and much higher than the 9.5 percent national average. With an estimated 100 million energy inefficient homes in America, weatherization could create jobs and provide relief for thousands of workers, veteran and non-veteran alike.

LIUNA – the Laborers International Union of North America – has led the training effort for the veterans, who will be fully-certified as energy auditors and weatherization technicians at the end of a four-week course.

“Labor Day is a time to celebrate working families, but it also serves as a painful reminder that economic conditions are dismal and many, including veterans are out of work,” said Dennis Martire, LIUNA Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Regional Manager. “Through LIUNA’s training program, we are proud to prepare these veterans to be a part of a larger, highly-skilled weatherization workforce that will work for living wages and health benefits.”

Labor Day marks the ends of the LIUNA classroom training phase and the beginning of an eight-week apprenticeship with Ardent360, a metro DC contractor that provides residential energy efficiency services to customers throughout the region. During the apprenticeship, trainees will weatherize the 50 homes, using materials and supplies all manufactured in the U.S.A. At the end of the pilot, Veterans Green Jobs will work with Ardent360 and other construction companies to explore the long-term placement for program participants.

For more information please visit: <http://veteransgreenjobs.org/mheep>