

No Family Left Behind

Management and labor work together to support military families.

Together, SMACNA Boston and SMART local 17 spend as much as \$50,000 on military programs each year.

It all started in the winter of 1991 when Jeff Chase, president of COX Engineering Co., made a motion at a SMACNA Boston chapter meeting to divert advertising funds to U.S. troops serving in Desert Storm and to their families.

“A lot of our employees and office staff were being called up,” Chase says. “We had been talking about buying advertising with the Boston teams—the Celtics and Bruins—to promote the chapter. It just came to me at the end of the meeting: Why not give that money to the families of our troops instead?”

SMACNA Boston Executive Director Tom Gunning supported the motion. “Our troops sacrifice so much for our well being at home—we need to remember how fortunate we are and take care of our own,” he says.

Indeed, supporting the military is a natural fit for SMACNA Boston and SMART local 17, considering children of SMACNA Boston contractors have attended military academies and enlisted and many members of SMART local 17 are affiliated with the military in some way, including as reservists and veterans.

Perhaps that is why the program that Chase started is around 21 years later.

Today, SMACNA Boston uses money from its general operating fund to support military families, whether their member is deployed or actively serving at home.

“Each family receives \$900 a month,” says Chase. “SMACNA donates \$500 and the other \$400 comes from SMART local 17. Today, we support as many as 15 families.”

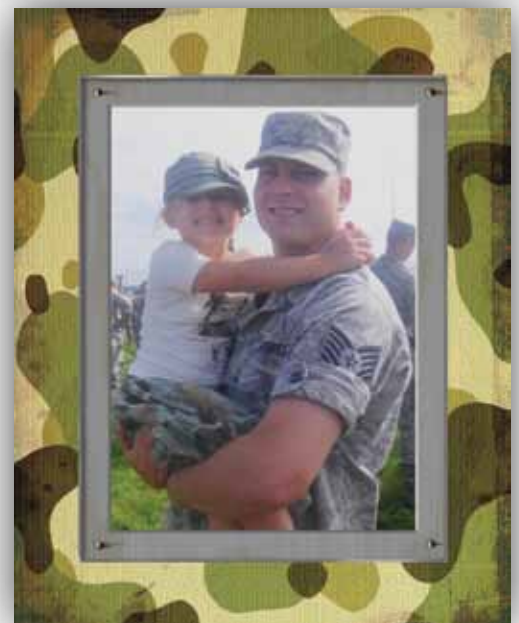
Carepacks

Army veteran Rick Donohue, vice president and treasurer at Harrington Brothers Corp., was drafted in 1972 and remembers serving in an “unpopular” war.

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Top: Care Packs celebrated its 15,000th package packed and sent. The program, co-founded by Harrington Brother's VP Rick Donohue eight years ago, is an all-volunteer organization supported by SMACNA Boston and many others.



Right, Stephen McKunes and daughter Ava. McKunes is an Air Force reservist and an apprentice with SMART local 17.

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“A lot of us served at a time when it was not cool to be in the military. The day I was discharged, I was spit on at Oakland International Airport.

“If we can bring a little smile to a face of lonely soldiers far away from their friends and family, then it’s all worth it. We need to keep in mind that all the freedoms we have are because of their effort.” Donohue’s son Evan recently enlisted in the Army.

Donohue is one of the originators of Carepacks, a non-profit organization dedicated to sending care packages to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is staffed and managed entirely by volunteers and began with one package Donohue sent to his son-in-law eight years ago.

Carepacks celebrated sending 15,000 packages this summer. The Massachusetts State Senate recognized the program with a citation presented by Senator Robert Hedlund. The program also received a citation from the Weymouth Town Council and Mayor Sue Kay.

According to Donohue, this feat was accomplished with the help of many hands. “Through the end of 2011, we spent \$170,000 on shipping and \$202,000 on everything that went into the boxes. SMACNA contractors have been very generous to our cause.”

No Reserve About Reservists

Leadership at SMART local 17 and SMACNA contractors focus first on their craftspersons who serve in the military

Cox Engineering and Harrington Brothers both employ several craftspersons from SMART local 17 who are also reservists, including Stephen McKunes. McKunes recently returned from a deployment and three activations in the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

McKunes had already gone through two of the five years’ apprenticeship training at SMART local 17 when he was deployed for four months in 2009 to the U.S. Reservist Forward Operating Base in Southwest Asia. His apprenticeship spot was waiting for him.

He appreciates SMART’s willingness to work with his schedule. “After I came back to continue my apprenticeship, the Air Force activated me three times to our home station at Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee.”

He spent seven months away in 2010, a month in 2011, and three months in 2012. Despite all that, McKunes has been hired by Harrington Bros. He will reach journeyman status in the spring of 2013.

“Today, we support as many as 15 families.”

—Jeff Chase, president of COX Engineering Co.



Top: The McKunes are involved in both the military and sheet metal. Stephen (front, in uniform) will reach journeyman status in Spring 2013. Younger brother Patrick is a Marine and a fourth-year apprentice, and twin brother Mark is in the Air Force.

Bottom, Stephen McKunes participates in the Sheet Metal Workers SMART local 17 Helmets to Hardhats program. He works for Harrington Brothers.

Help for Wounded Soldiers’ Families

SMACNA Boston donated \$5,000 raised at a membership meeting last Christmas for the Fisher House Boston, which serves wounded soldiers and their families.

Fisher House Foundation donates “comfort homes,” built on the grounds of major military and veteran’s medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times.

According to Jen Deluca, assistant to the Board of Directors, the money donated by SMACNA Boston was timely. “It just happened that last winter was the first time we’ve had to reach out to a hotel since our suites were all filled. We will never turn a family away,” explains Deluca. “That \$5,000 enabled us to provide the hotel rooms our families needed.” ■

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Jesse Pritchard of Montana's SMART local 103 in Montana also values the time he spent with contractors. "It left me trying to picture myself in the contractor's shoes a little more—trying to look at things from both sides."

Perspective was what Brad Matulevich, a third year apprentice from SMART local 100 in Washington, DC, gained. "Now that I understand the impact union benefits have on contractors' bottom line, I think union members should always be asking themselves, 'How do we help our contractors win jobs?'"

Communication

All of these apprentices could agree that even though labor and management are going in the right direction, they need to communicate a lot more. That's what the Partners in Progress

Conference is all about, from impromptu "hallway" discussions to break-out and general sessions.

"I value getting together with counterparts from different markets and different parts of the country and having the conversations we should be having, but we're usually not," Hunckley says.

He believes it's worthwhile to sit down with a business owner who has no reason not to share details of the business, how he runs it, and what his financial stakes are. "They are the kinds of talks I could benefit from having with my own employer."

Chadwick Paine of Washington state's SMART local 66 admits that although he has a great relationship with his boss, it's sometimes easier to talk with other contractors.

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Bringing together the best of the best from across North America, the International Apprenticeship Contest demonstrated that the industry will be in good hands when these craftsmen take their places as foremen, supervisors, business agents and even contractors. Take a look at what went on during the competition at sheetmetal-iti.org/contests/ or by scanning the code with your mobile device.

