



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Opportunity Inc. Receives Additional \$5 Million from the U.S. Department of Labor to Train Military Spouses for Jobs in High-Growth Industries**

*Opportunity Inc. partners with Peninsula and Crater Workforce Investment Boards to continue support to military families throughout the Hampton Roads and Petersburg regions.*

**Hampton Roads, VA (July 20, 2004)** Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announced the final \$5 million installment of a \$20 million National Emergency Grant, which was awarded to Opportunity Inc. in July of 2001. The Grant, used to develop the NEXStep program, provides free career counseling and job training to eligible Military Spouses, Reserve and National Guard members and Department of Defense Civilian employees.

With more than 100,000 active-duty personnel and 40,000 military spouses, Hampton Roads is home to the largest military community in the country. NEXStep offers support to military families, by providing eligible military spouses the opportunity to enhance their skill sets, increase their earning potential and be more competitive in the labor market, in turn benefiting the regional economy.

All training leads to job placement. Prior to entering a training program, participants are required to research the likelihood of employment resulting from completion of their coursework. "In this way, we can ensure participants are exiting the NEXStep program with the skills sets that are most needed by the business community," said Judy Begland, President and CEO of Opportunity Inc.

With Hampton Roads home to families from every branch of the military, Opportunity Inc., was committed to serve individuals on both sides of the water and into the Petersburg area.

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As such, Opportunity Inc. has partnered with the Greater Peninsula Workforce Development Consortium and the Crater Workforce Investment Board to create a larger service area for the NEXStep program.

NEXStep works hand-in-hand with existing military family support programs. The program augments the military's family support centers by providing free career counseling and training opportunities. Together with military partnerships, the program provides eligible individuals with a wide range of employment resource and training opportunities, which ultimately lead to job placement within the Hampton Roads and Petersburg regions.

“NEXStep represents a unique and important partnership between the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Labor. By working together, we're able to provide more support to military families at a time when they need it most, while more effectively developing our regional workforce,” said Captain Michael Collins, Commanding Officer, Naval Support Activity, Norfolk and Program Manager for the Mid-Atlantic Region's Support Service Programs.

To be eligible for NEXStep services, individuals must be:

- Military spouses who have had to leave a job due to an official military transfer or have lost a job in the local area as a result of a layoff.
- Department of Defense civilian employees who have received Reduction In Force (RIF) notification.
- Reserve and National Guard members who have been activated due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01, as a result of the Iraq war, or the war against terrorism, and have served over 180 days of active duty.

Individuals who may be in need of assistance, but do not fall into one of the above categories will be referred to the One-Stop Career Center nearest them for additional employment resources and training opportunities.

NEXStep services are available through local One-Stop Career Centers, as well as on select military bases. To learn more about NEXStep visit us on line at [www.nex-step.org](http://www.nex-step.org) or call:

Southside: 757-461-7537  
Peninsula: 757-865-5852  
Petersburg: 804-862-6155

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### **About Opportunity Inc.**

Opportunity Inc. promotes effective workforce development strategies throughout South and Western Hampton Roads. Its initiatives are intended to respond to the needs of the business community for trained and qualified workers. Through successful efforts that strengthen the regional workforce, the organization endeavors to increase per capita income, promote greater corporate competitiveness and improve regional prosperity.