

Dept. of Workforce Development: Seven Regional Businesses Earn Gold Awards as Exemplary Veterans Employers

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GREEN BAY – Seven Northeastern Wisconsin employers, ranging in size from a few dozen employees to thousands, earned top honors from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) for leadership in hiring, training, supporting, and advancing veterans and their families. Winners of the [Vets Ready Initiative](#) awards, along with some of their veteran employees, gathered at the Brown County Job Center Friday to receive the honors on behalf of Gov. Tony Evers from DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek and Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Mary Kolar.

“Wisconsin’s veterans bring critically important skills to the workforce and their contributions have helped our economy achieve record-breaking performance this year,” Pechacek said. “By leveraging the experience and talents of veterans, Wisconsin’s award-winning Vets Ready employers are building a more competitive workforce while creating stronger communities. DWD applauds these efforts.”

The Vets Ready Initiative encourages employers to establish a support system within their workplace, hire and retain more veterans, and connect with veterans in the community and their families. Every year, DWD recognizes businesses that have gone above and beyond for the veteran workforce. Businesses are separated into three categories – small, medium, large – and either receive a gold or silver certification. The Disabled American Veterans Department of Wisconsin also serves as a partner in the initiative.

“My congratulations to this year’s Vets Ready award recipients who have gone the extra mile for those who have served and call Wisconsin home,” WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar said. “It’s admirable to support those who have served, and at the end of the day, it’s good business. The knowledge, skills, and abilities that veterans have are unmatched, and employers are setting themselves up for success when they reach out to former service members.”

The official commendation from Gov. Tony Evers highlights the employers’ commitment to practices that encourage the full participation of veterans in the workforce so that they can realize their employment potential and the state can benefit from their broad range of skills and experience. **The 2022 Northeastern Wisconsin Winners are:**

4IMPRINT, Oshkosh - Gold Award. The company:

Prioritizes veteran employment opportunities, sending open positions to veteran-specific organizations and other diversity organizations to recruit and attract new talent.

Celebrates veterans with paid time off that goes above and beyond for veterans and their spouses – including Veterans Day.

Displays photos of veteran associates and emblems of each military branch throughout their facilities.

Sets veteran hiring goals, with an annual benchmark of 5.7% protected veteran employees.

Children’s Products, Neenah - Gold Award. The company:

Utilizes the resources from both the Office of Veteran Employment Services and the Fox Valley Veterans Council to help staff engage with benefits including education, medical claims, career assistance, and job training, to name a few.

Connects all veteran employees with a mentor on their first day of work to support their success and help them get started.

Partners with local food pantry organizations to help veterans and their families in need of food.

Kimberly-Clark, Neenah - Gold Award. The company:

Hosts the SALUTE (Service Alliance Uniting Together) employee resource group whose vision is to make a positive impact on Kimberly-Clark, veteran employees, their families, and the communities they live in.

Hosts the Capabilities First employee resource group, which directly supports employees and their families with disabilities. Supports veteran-community efforts which include sending cards and packages to deployed service members.

Retains 79% of veteran staff over a five-year period. Accepting the award for Kimberly-Clark, Wayne Beyer said of the program, "We're not done yet...we look forward to the work we have yet to accomplish for veterans."

Kingsbury, Oshkosh - Gold Award. The company:

Prioritizes veteran hiring, as 6.4% of the workforce is veterans and the goal is to raise that level 2% each year.

Honors veterans through a veteran wall, flag display, and photos of veteran team members and their families.

Writes and hand-delivers personal letters to veteran staff during Military Appreciation month.

MCC Inc., Appleton - Gold Award. The company:

Strives to not only support but also utilize veteran employees' leadership in every part of the company.

Engages with Wisconsin veteran organizations such as veteran nonprofits, DWD, and DVA.

Posts jobs at Transition Assistance Program (TAP) centers nationwide to attract veteran talent from across the country.

Oshkosh Corp., Oshkosh - Gold Award. The company:

Employs more than 1,100 veterans Hosts the Oshkosh Corporation Military Network (OCMN), a veteran employee resource group that provides career coaching, mentoring, and an opportunity to connect with service members across the company.

Connects new team members with another veteran within the organization.

Accepting the award for Oshkosh Corp., Jay Junkins – himself an Air Force veteran – said, “We truly believe that a veteran is a force multiplier.”

Precision Ice Blast Corp., Peshtigo – Gold Award. The company:

Employs a veteran liaison who not only manages veteran recruiting, but also serves as the primary point of contact for veteran support in the community. Prioritizes veteran hiring initiatives to achieve a 25% veteran workforce.

Works to match and exceed veteran wages in comparable military service grades.

Joel Williams, accepting the award for the company, said that while the company initially set up its program focusing on the question, “What can veterans do for us?” the focus has shifted.

“Veterans have attributes we found desirable, but as our veteran hiring program took shape, we began to ask a different question: ‘What can we do for our veterans?’” To learn more about Vets Ready and how to apply, please go to [Vets Ready Employer Initiative website](#).