

Jobless Warriors looking for Boston volunteers

Zack Huffman
Senior Reporter

Returning home from a battlefield may be a godsend for the many men and women serving in the United States military.

But for many troops that return also means taking on the unenviable task of re-entering a workforce with new skill sets that may not easily translate to getting a job.

In the hopes of curbing that trend, J.R. Rodrigues is working towards the launch of his new organization, Jobless Warriors, which seeks to match volunteers with unique job-hunting skills, with veterans who are currently job seekers.

According to Rodrigues, he was compelled to take action after reading a news article in the *Providence Journal* last fall that detailed the trials of a returning Iraq war veteran who struggled to get his life back on track.

"He couldn't find a job, he became homeless and lived out of his car for a month," said Rodrigues. "He ended up getting a job and turning his life around, but it really hit a nerve with me."

"This is a national campaign," said Rodrigues. "I am looking to turn the dial back on veteran unemployment."

According to numbers released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in January 2012,

while the unemployment rate for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan has been slowly dropping, it's still at 9.1 percent, higher than the national average.

Although he found that he would be unable to make a substantial contribution in terms of donations, he still wanted to give back something.

"I've got a daughter in college and a son getting ready to start," said Rodrigues. "I won't be donating \$1 million any time soon to solve the problem. My specialty is growing companies."

Thanks to experience working for various companies Rodrigues realized he could rely on a network of professionals with various talents that can be shared to help veterans with their job searching.

"I realized that I could put together an organization that tries to get veterans a career, with the philosophy that if you give a veteran a job, he or she will work in the term, but if you teach a veteran how to get a job, he or she will work for a life time," he said. "There's this untapped well of goodwill among the private sector. These days, I believe that there's this real sense of good feelings and good will in wanting to help veterans."

According to Rodrigues, although many soldiers hone plenty of valuable skills through their service in the



J.R. Rodrigues, left, goes over a resume looking for ways to spruce it up.

COURTESY PHOTO

military, it can often be difficult to explain how that training can be beneficial in the workplace.

"They have tremendous difficulty translating their military skills into something a private sector hiring manager can understand," said Rodrigues.

What Rodrigues hopes to do is to match up veterans with various professionals who can provide pro-bono assistance in a variety of job hunting skills, such as resume writing, career coaching or interviewing skills.

"One of my volunteers is a hair stylist in Boston," said Rodrigues. "He's going to give

them a free hair cut before an interview."

Jobless Warriors currently has about 100 volunteers - many of whom hail from the Boston area - getting ready for the program launch. Before that happens, Rodrigues hopes to dramatically expand that number.

"I need to have a critical mass of volunteers," he said. "I don't want a handful of career coaches to get overwhelmed by

a thousand veterans."

As he continues to build his volunteer base, Rodrigues interested in hearing from potential volunteers who have skills in any area that can be imparted on veteran job seekers.

"Anybody who thinks they can help a veteran get a job, I'd like to hear from them," said Rodrigues. "They may have a new idea I haven't thought of."

Rodrigues can be contacted at info@joblesswarrior.org.

Segway lawsuit against city dismissed

Zack Huffman
Senior Reporter

Boston Gliders owner Allen Danley reminded defiant Monday afternoon, even as his lawsuit against the city and its anti-Segway ordinance was thrown out of federal court.

"People don't really care about people's rights," he said. "They care about getting rid of somebody who is annoying them."

Last month, a scheduled hearing on a motion to dismiss the case against Danley was postponed at defense counsel's request. The hearing had been scheduled after Danley was accused of more than 20 violations of a city ordinance against operating Segway devices on city sidewalks. No new date has yet been selected.

Danley remained critical of the Segway regulation ordinance which creates a method of application and enforcement for the use of Segways in the city, while also spelling out a method for ticketing as enforcement.

"It's clear, why they've created this law," said Danley. "They have no intention of do-

ing anything other than writing a ticket."

The new ordinance calls for all Segway tours to be conducted by leaders who have been subjected to a background check from the Boston Police's Hackney Division. According to Danley, the Hackney Division has yet to complete a single background check.

Although Danley has previously argued that Boston's Segway ordinance is in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), according to the court decision, authored by Justice George O'Toole Jr., Danley's side of the case failed to sufficiently establish the violation to the ADA, leaving O'Toole with little jurisdiction in the matter from a federal court standpoint.

There is a silver lining in the case of Danley's challenge of the ordinance's legal legitimacy.

Although his lawsuit was thrown out, Danley said it was tossed for jurisdictional reasons based on technicalities. Danley also said the lawsuit was dismissed without prejudice, which legally allows him to tweak his legal challenge and

refile it. The only drawback to this is that it would need more assistance from a lawyer, which means more money would have to be spent.

"That's going to cost additional money," said Danley. "We don't have that money today. If you want to fight someone you have to have resources and money."

Spurned by disgruntled residents in the North End area, City Councilor Sal LaMattina along with Boston Transportation Department Director Tom Tinlin began looking into the potential problems created by the unregulated use of Segways in dense, downtown neighborhoods.

The Councilor decided that the safety threat was too high, and passed a City Council ordinance that restricted where Segways could travel, while also limiting the size of Segway tours. The emphasis on Segway tours incensed Danley, as his company is the only one offering tours in the city.

In federal court, Danley hopes to be able to transcend a city government that he be-

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