



**TESTIMONY OF
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SENIOR DIRECTOR, MILITARY PROGRAMS, WALMART
FOR PRESENTATION BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member O'Rourke and Members of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity,

On behalf of Walmart Inc., I want to thank you for the opportunity to rejoin you today to talk about hiring and retaining veterans for the modern-day workforce. I had the privilege of testifying before the House Veterans Affairs Committee in 2014, and, as I stated then, I am grateful for your leadership and partnership in honoring our nation's veterans' service and sacrifice and for all you do to aid in their transition to civilian life.

Walmart has a rich history with veterans, those who serve on active duty and in the Reserve and National Guard, and veteran and military families. Arguably, it began with Captain, U.S. Army, Sam Walton who founded Walmart over 50 years ago. His legacy

has been enriched by countless veteran associates over the years and has been further enhanced by our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment established in 2013 and expanded in 2015 when we pledged to hire 250,000 veterans by 2020.

Since 2013, Walmart has added more than 200,000 veterans to our U.S. workforce and promoted more than 28,000 to roles with higher pay and greater responsibility. Their jobs range from part-time hourly to salaried management; from Walmart Stores and Sam's Clubs; to Distribution Centers and Transportation Offices; and to our Corporate Headquarters.

When we announced our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment in 2013, our goal was to put returning post 9/11 U.S. veterans back to work. At the time, the unemployment rate for these returning veterans was disturbingly high. Now, it is at the lowest it's been in decades, and we'd like to think we've played a small part in helping bring the number down; rather than taking a victory lap, however, we must remain vigilant and know that more work remains.

Veterans bring years of leadership training, problem solving and a host of other strong, transferrable skills to civilian jobs and careers. Hiring veterans should be a top priority for any company that wants to add true leaders, problem solvers and innovators to their workforce.

I've spent the last decade helping veterans find employment. Through my interactions with these men and women, I've listened to their frustrations with navigating the multiple agencies offering job placement services and the struggles they face when applying their military skills to civilian job descriptions. We can and must do better by these men and women who gave so much for our country.

We've learned over the years that we have a much better chance of retaining our veteran hires if they have an early understanding of the company's mission; if they are able to make a positive impact to their team and/or the business quickly; and if they feel supported. Furthermore, we've found that a clear vision of a new veteran associate's future or career path within the organization is one of the more crucial pieces to veteran recruitment and retention.

To realize those ends:

Our evolving, but generally enduring, strategic and programmatic approach includes an integrated, complementary, technology-powered and people-infused process to achieve scale without sacrificing a human touch: determining career aspirations, translating a portfolio of experience, communicating it to talent acquisition professionals, and interviewing can be quite daunting for those transitioning from the military; therefore, Walmart offers an opportunity for veteran candidates to consult with experts.

Perhaps one of our most successful practices is our onboarding process where we place new hires with seasoned associates who are veterans, military spouses, current serving members of the Guard or Reserve or those who have an affinity for those who have served.

At Walmart, we believe that retail can be a powerful engine for economic mobility, and we are committed to helping make it a place of inclusive opportunity where our jobs and purchase orders can help people build a better life for themselves and their families. We recognize that technology is changing how we work, live and shop, and the effects of automation are on everyone's mind. In a world in which new skills are required to meet the rapidly changing demands of customers, we are investing in training for our associates to help meet the increasing expectations of our customers, including the use of technology. For our frontline workers, we're providing training and talent development aimed at building foundational and advanced skills through our Pathways program and Academies.

The Pathways training program helps associates gain vital retail job skills including merchandising, teamwork and communications. Our Academies offer hands-on, immersive learning, using cutting-edge technology in handheld devices and virtual reality and combines both classroom study and training on the sales floor. To date, more than 400,000 associates have been through Pathways, and more than 250,000 have completed the Academy training program. While we don't currently track the number of veterans that are going through Pathways and Academies, we do know that

many are utilizing these training programs and some are even instructors at our Academies.

Earlier this month, Walmart unveiled a new associate education [benefit](#) designed to remove barriers to college enrollment and graduation. In partnership with Guild Education, Walmart associates will be able to access affordable, high-quality associate's and bachelor's degrees in Business or Supply Chain Management. Under the program, which will be made available to all Walmart U.S. associates, Walmart will subsidize the cost of higher education, beyond financial aid and an associate contribution equivalent to \$1 a day. In addition, associates can earn college credit for paid training at Walmart Academies. Hundreds of thousands of associates have already undergone skills training equivalent to more than \$210 million in college credits. This will save associates both time and money in completing their degree. We anticipate that our veteran associates will take us up on this offer, and we also believe that it may help in recruiting transitioning service members.

An additional business initiative that I feel holds tremendous value for our veterans and military families is our Military Family Promise. The Military Family Promise guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed by the company who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military. It allows military spouses, in particular, to remain in the same personnel and pay systems, and gives them the opportunity to turn jobs into careers.

While I've shared with you what Walmart is doing to recruit, hire and retain veteran talent, you should also know that outside of what we do for our employees, we are actively seeking products from veteran-owned businesses to add to our stores and on-line assortment. Two weeks ago, we held our fifth annual [Open Call](#) where we invited suppliers to our home office to pitch products made in the U.S. Out of the more than 450 companies that attended, 22 self-identified as veteran-owned. Gaining a purchase order from Walmart can be a powerful thing for a veteran entrepreneur, and we see more opportunity here to cultivate and help grow these businesses. As a founding member of the [Coalition of Veteran Owned Business](#), Walmart is committed to help grow and support veteran owned businesses in communities throughout the U.S. The Coalition provides economic opportunity to veterans, their families and the communities in which they live by offering leadership and a national platform to support military spouse and veteran-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and suppliers.

Whenever possible, Walmart shares what we have learned about veteran employment with others – in this regard, we aim to help others to do the same – accelerating/maximizing impact.

In the spirit of accelerating and maximizing impact, in 2011, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation committed \$20 million through 2015 to support veterans and their families with assistance for programs that provide job training, transition help and education. With the early completion of the commitment in May of 2014, Walmart and the Walmart

Foundation renewed the commitment, announcing an additional \$20 million through 2019 to support job training, education and innovative public/private community-based initiatives that address challenges many veterans face when returning to civilian life.

While Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are supporting many organizations doing great work with veteran transition through these commitments, three that I want to callout are [Hire Heroes USA](#), the [Institute for Veterans and Military Families](#) (IVMF) at Syracuse University, and [The Henry M. Jackson Foundation](#) .

Hire Heroes USA's singular focus on veteran employment is not only working to place veterans with the right job, but also gaining incredible insights into what the critical needs are for those separating from service.

IVMF's [AmericaServes](#) program streamlines and digitally connects veterans to services in their communities. Through our commitment, we are supporting AmericaServes programs in New York, the Carolinas and Texas.

As we seek to learn more about what's working in the field, we look to grantees like the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine's Center for Public-Private Partnerships. Our investment in [The Veterans Metrics Initiative \(TVMI\): Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being](#), a five year study, launched in 2015, is following 9,500 veterans 0-90 days post separation from military service to

within three years thereafter, documenting and analyzing the components of the transition and reintegration programs veterans report that they use.

Since 2011, we've been very deliberate about our funding efforts to support transitioning veterans and military families, and, in the last few years, we've been intentional about applying a gender lens to these efforts. As the number of women joining our U.S. Armed Forces has grown rapidly over the years, so have the number of female veterans reintegrating to civilian life.

Two organizations that are focusing on the unmet needs of women veterans are the Boston University School of Medicine and Goodwill. Boston University School of Medicine launched the [Women Veterans Network](#) (WoVeN) just last year with the help of a grant from the Walmart Foundation. Also in 2017, the Walmart Foundation awarded a grant to support [Goodwill's Operation: GoodJobs](#), which in its next iteration, will place a special emphasis on resources and job training for female veterans.

As we look to the future, we see great potential to address the remaining barriers to successful transition from military service to civilian life, but only through collaboration and a shared vision will we realize it. When government programs and initiatives, large and small corporations, and non-profit organizations come together much is possible. One prominent example, of which we are a proud partner, is the Stand-To convening,

launched last year by the George W. Bush Institute's Military Service Initiative and now in its second year.

Our goal is to synchronize efforts and empower every veteran and his or her family to lead a full and meaningful life by achieving optimal health and wellbeing, leveraging education and workforce readiness, and fostering employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. With clearer data, unified vision, and a leading strategy, we can better serve our veterans and their families; maximize national effort and resourcing; enhance our national security by contributing to the preservation of the all-volunteer force; ensure our global competitiveness and civic leadership; bring our military-veteran and civilian populations closer together; and meet our moral and social obligations to our veterans.

We salute America's heroes. We are honored to have the opportunity to employ them, to learn from them, and to support them and their families in every way we can.

Thanks again to the Subcommittee for its leadership and partnership and for holding this hearing...I appreciate the invitation to appear and look forward to answering your questions.

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APPENDIX

- I. Walmart Military Fact Sheet**
- II. Military Family Promise Impact Story**
- III. WoVeN Impact Story**



Supporting Those Who Serve: Walmart's Commitment to Veterans and Military Families

At Walmart, we are grateful for the sacrifice our nation's veterans, military men and women and their families have made in service to our country. It is our duty and our honor to support our military not only when they are in uniform but also when they transition to civilian life. We are committed to helping them as they face this important period through job opportunities as well as support for programs that provide job training, reintegration support and education.

Veterans Hiring Commitment

On Memorial Day 2013, Walmart introduced our Veterans Welcome Home Commitment, which guaranteed a job offer to any eligible, honorably discharged U.S. veteran who was within 12 months of active duty. Our initial goal was to hire 100,000 veterans by the end of 2018.

- In May 2015, we announced the expansion of our original projection with a new goal of hiring 250,000 veterans by the end of 2020. We also changed the eligibility from within 12 months of active duty to any veteran honorably discharged since we announced the commitment in 2013.
- Since Memorial Day 2013, Walmart has hired 200,820 veterans, and 28,839 have been promoted to roles of greater responsibility.¹
- Veterans can explore career options with the company at www.walmartcareerswithamission.com.

Supporting Veterans

Whether through career fairs, recognition campaigns, entrepreneurial support or company policies, Walmart seeks to demonstrate the value veterans bring to the workforce and to our communities.

- [Hiring Our Heroes](#) — Walmart, Sam's Club and other employers have recruited tens of thousands of veterans through hundreds of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes' career fairs.
- [Coalition for Veteran Owned Business](#) — As a founding member of the Coalition for Veteran Owned Business, Walmart is committed to help the organization grow and support veteran owned businesses in communities throughout the U.S. The Coalition provides economic opportunity to veterans, their families and the communities in which they live by offering leadership and a national platform to support military spouse and veteran-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and suppliers.
- [Greenlight A Vet](#) — In its third year, GLAV continues to encourage communities to mobilize around a shared purpose of showing appreciation to our nation's veterans through volunteering with veteran organizations, raising awareness on social media and signaling appreciation by changing one light to green in one's home or business.
- [Military Family Promise](#) — Walmart guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed by the company who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military.
- [Military Leave of Absence \(MLOA\)](#) — Since 2008, Walmart has offered differential pay to associates taking a leave of absence for specific military assignments lasting more than three days and through the duration of leave. If an associate's military salary is less than what they make at their job at Walmart, the company will pay them the difference while they're on MLOA. In May, Walmart announced enhancements to this policy to include any eligible military assignment, including basic training, allowing associates who are considering enlisting in the Armed Forces to do so without fear of losing wages.

¹ These projections and reported hires/promotions include veterans hired under our original and expanded Veterans Welcome Home Commitment as well as other veterans hired by Walmart in this time frame. While we think it is particularly important to support soldiers as they make the transition to civilian life, Walmart believes all veterans deserve our respect and support, no matter when they left active duty.

Education, Job Training and Reintegration Assistance

In 2011, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation recognized that opportunity sometimes isn't the only challenge facing transitioning military families. The company committed \$20 million by 2015 to support veterans and their families with assistance for programs that provide job training, transition help and education. With the early completion of the commitment in May of 2014, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation renewed the commitment, announcing an additional \$20 million through 2019 to support job training, education and innovative public/private community-based initiatives that address challenges many veterans face when returning to civilian life.

The following are a few of the most recent programs supported with the \$40 million commitment from Walmart and the Walmart Foundation:

[Boston University School of Medicine](#) — Launched in 2017 with the help of a \$469k grant from the Walmart Foundation, the Women Veterans Network (WoVeN) at Boston University is a program where BU clinicians and researchers are leading a 5-year initiative to establish a nationwide network of structured, trained peer-facilitated, 10-week support groups for female veterans to enhance wellness, quality of life, family relationships and referrals for additional services.

- In May 2018, the Walmart Foundation granted over \$250,000 to WoVeN building upon the 2017 grant to continue strengthening the initiative. When complete the program projects that it will have served ~ 2,500 female veterans.

[The Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc.](#) — Center for Public-Private Partnerships (CP3): In 2015, the Walmart Foundation awarded a \$500k grant to support The Veterans Metrics Initiative (TVMI): Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being study.

- This five-year study will assess the well-being of 9,500 veterans 0-90 days post separation from military service to within three years thereafter, and document and analyze the components of the transition and reintegration programs the veterans report that they use.

[Institute for Veterans and Military Families \(IVMF\) at Syracuse University](#) — IVMF launched the AmericaServes initiative in 2013 to streamline and digitally connect veteran services available in communities and create the nation's first coordinated system of public, private and non-profit organizations.

- Building off of a \$1 million Walmart Foundation grant awarded in 2015, the Foundation granted an additional \$5 million in 2016 to support the ongoing implementation of existing AmericaServes communities and seed planning investments in New York, the Carolinas and Texas.

[Goodwill Industries International](#) — Launched in 2012 with a \$1 million grant from the Walmart Foundation, and a subsequent \$5 million grant in 2013, Operation: GoodJobs (OGJ) has helped thousands of veterans and military spouses with job training and placement services.

- With an additional \$5 million grant awarded in 2017, the Walmart Foundation is funding the next iteration of OGJ programming which places a special emphasis on resources and job training for female veterans.

Additional Veteran and Military Family Service Organizations funded through the \$40 million commitment:

- **[Operation Homefront](#)** - In response to the 2017 hurricane season, the Walmart Foundation granted \$500,000 to the organization's Critical Financial Assistance program to help meet the urgent needs for military families affected by disaster or deployed to help with relief and recovery.
- **[Blue Star Families](#)** - With a mission to strengthen military families every day, Blue Star Families strives to better understand and provide solutions to the challenges facing today's military families through career development, caregiving and leading research on military family life.
- **[Hire Heroes USA](#)** - With a singular focus on veteran employment, Hire Heroes USA offers personalized employment training to clients at no cost, delivering a three-phase, high-touch program that helps clients market their skills and secure meaningful employment.

OPPORTUNITY

How A Promise to Military Families Eased the Stress of Change

By Ronnie Vowell
Asset Protection Coordinator at Store 4057 in Joplin, Missouri
May 23, 2017



When my wife received her transfer orders, we prepared ourselves for the Army to move us from Wichita, Kansas to Joplin, Missouri.

Once again, we were off to a new-to-us destination. The life of a military family is not for those who don't like change. So much of life is built around constants, yet in a military life, change is one of those constants.

I admire my wife for her devotion to our family and to our country. I get it. I really do. I served from 1992-2006 in the U.S. Marine Corps, and my wife has served in the U.S. Army since 2000. Both of us spent time overseas with Operation Iraqi Freedom. And while I chose to transition to civilian life a few years ago, my wife stayed the course and built a career with the Army.

Most don't think about the toll transfers take on military families; when one serves, we all serve. Being at the military's beck and call is something we are used to. We know what we signed up for. While I'm not complaining about this life of service, trying to quickly find a new job when your spouse is transferred can be challenging and stressful.



But there was something different this time – something that made our family’s latest transfer experience better than it has ever been before.

As an asset protection manager at store 3492 in Wichita, Kansas, I wasn’t familiar with Walmart’s [Military Family Promise](#) (MFP) program until I spoke to a friend who worked at the home office. The MFP program guarantees a job at a nearby store or club for all military personnel and military spouses employed at Walmart or Sam’s Club who move to a different part of the country because they or their spouse have been transferred by the U.S. military. I had no idea we had policies in place to support me, a military spouse.

I didn’t go into the MFP process with any preconceived notions. I knew I might not get the exact job I wanted unless something opened up. And, while I would’ve been thankful for any opportunity, I was fortunate enough to land the exact same position I had in Wichita at a Neighborhood Market in Joplin, Missouri, just a few miles away from where my wife is serving.

I knew Walmart cared about veterans and was familiar with our [Veterans Welcome Home Commitment](#). But I had no idea we had policies in place to support me, a military spouse. The MFP allows me to focus on what’s most important during this transition – and that’s getting my house in order and getting my kids acclimated to their new surroundings.

I’m also taking time to share my story so other military family associates can take advantage of MFP and focus on what’s important in their lives during their own moves. Thanks to programs like these, we don’t just have jobs at Walmart, we have careers.

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COMMUNITY

A Common Thread Is Woven Between Women Veterans

By Tina Brice
U.S. Marine Corps veteran
May 22, 2018



Last year, I was dealing with some major life issues: transitioning careers as an older adult and stressing about loved ones who were incarcerated. My energy was low, and my self-identity was in question. As a single, divorced mom of two young adults, I was trying to be strong and cope with life all alone.

I realized I hadn't had a great support system since I'd left the Marines over 20 years ago. That was my missing puzzle piece – I needed to find fellow women veterans who understood my experiences and the special bond that military service provides.

I'd tried many times over the years to find such a sounding board, but continually came up short. I knew there were a lot of people with similar experiences out there, but I thought maybe they were like me and hesitant to speak up about their service.

Then suddenly, just when life was hardest and I needed support the most, I found Women Veterans Network (WoVeN), a support group made specifically for women like me.

After attending one of their community focus groups, I eagerly joined WoVeN, and as Marines say, I hit the ground running. I never imagined something so simple could be so life changing,

but this organization – and more specifically, the women in it – gave me the spark I needed to push myself to be better and do more.



WoVen provided me a non-judgmental environment to openly express myself, communicate with and support other women veterans. And when that group came together, it created an atmosphere of energy, respect and understanding that I'd never witnessed in my life. I felt comfortable. The group was motivating and encouraging. I felt a sense of comradeship I hadn't experienced in years. WoVen accepted me as-is and put me back on the path to improving my quality of life



Since then, I've been inspired to take personal responsibility for my health and wellbeing. From mountain biking and completing a 5K, to developing new skills and better managing my stress, having this network of women has helped me improve not only my life, but also my family's.

Because this was such a valuable experience, I wanted to do more to give back. I've started to reach out to other women veterans and engage with them outside of the WoVeN community. Now, I have an extended family I can call on anytime. My hope is that WoVeN will continue to grow and reach more women veterans all over this country, so they can have the same experience and support I have.

In 2017, the Walmart Foundation awarded a \$469,000 grant to the Boston University School of Medicine (BU) to support the establishment of the WoVeN initiative. Through WoVeN, BU clinicians and researchers are leading a five-year initiative to establish a nationwide network of structured, trained peer-facilitated, 10-week support groups for women veterans to enhance wellness, quality of life, family relationships and referrals for additional services. Today, the Walmart Foundation is building on the existing grant to BU and is bringing its total commitment to WoVeN to nearly \$720,000 with the announcement of an [additional \\$250,782 grant](#). The program is projected to reach approximately 2,500 women veterans by the end of 2022.

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