

Help in driving a new career



The Workforce Development Board of Solano County helped put veteran Chad Eklof in the driver's seat – as a professional truck driver.

BY: [GAIL ALLYN SHORT](#) MARCH 7, 2022

Solano County workforce specialist assists retired veteran become pro truck driver

Chad Eklof, 56, of Suisun City in Solano County, retired from the Army Reserve in 2009 after 23 years of service that included tours of duty in the Gulf War and a stint in Kuwait.

During that time, he sustained chronic injuries, he says. Then after the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, the transport company where he worked as a manager began laying off workers and offering early retirement.

Eklof took early retirement, but wondered what he would do next.

"I decided that truck driving was something that I could do with my injuries," he says.

So he traveled to Dixon to speak with the instructor at AAA Academy, a Class A commercial driver's license training school. "(The instructor) said, 'You should consider going to the local workforce development agency. They might have a scholarship for you,'" Eklof recalls.

Eklof followed his advice and met with Cynthia Seals-Roper, a veteran employability specialist for the [Workforce Development Board of Solano County](#).

Seals-Roper helps veterans train for and land high-demand jobs through a process that begins with a thorough assessment of a veteran's skills and goals.



Cynthia Seals-Roper, Workforce Development Board of Solano County

"We may find that they need additional skills or training or a certification that would make them more marketable," Seals-Roper says.

She also takes into account and addresses any issues that would hamper job training or a successful job hunt such as a disability or homelessness.

Seals-Roper connects veterans with training providers and schools in the area.

Eklof says Seals-Roper helped him. "She explained the program, and because I was a veteran, she said there might be an opportunity for a scholarship."

In fact, the Workforce Development Board, through a state grant, will pay a portion or all of a veteran's training, depending on the cost, including monies for books, supplies and equipment, Seals-Roper says.

Eklof obtained a \$5,000 scholarship to pay for his four-week, 160-hour training program at AAA Academy. He successfully completed the program, and earned his certification and license. Afterward, Button Transportation, which owns AAA Academy, hired him to drive tanker trucks.

Lew Altomare, AAA Academy's chief academic officer, says hiring people like Eklof enhances the company.

"People with prior military experience tend to be very responsible," Altomare says. "That's a benefit for the company because drivers have start times, and you have to rely on them."

Eklof says he now enjoys a new career driving tanker trucks on the overnight shift, which gives him and his wife time to help take care of their 7-year-old granddaughter. He says, "I tell everybody I know about what the Workforce Development Board did for me, what it can do for you and how it can help you."

The Workforce Development Board of Solano County is here to help. Job seekers and employers can find valuable resources at www.solanoemployment.org.

Partner Spotlight: Helping veterans jump start new careers

The Workforce Development Board of Solano County collaborates with a number of local agencies to help veterans find jobs and train for new careers:

Nation's Finest – This non-profit organization connects veterans with employers and temporary agencies in Solano County and conducts frequent follow-up interviews to ensure that every job placement is

successful. The agency also hosts employment workshops that are designed to help veterans identify their skill sets and address any barriers that might hinder them from finding and keeping a job.

Veteran Service Office – Supports veterans through counseling and helping them access veteran benefits that include vocational rehabilitation as well as the GI Bill to pay for tuition.

Travis Air Force Base Airmen and Family Readiness Center – Provides resources for veterans who are making the transition to the civilian work world. That includes online resources and workshops on topics such as resume writing and how to get a job with the federal government.