

The

# WORKFORCE WIRE

News, events, and success stories about workforce programs in Iowa

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# Voc Rehab Self-Employment Program Helps 'Farmer Sarge' Orchard Grow



Brad Thill started gardening and planting trees as a way to relax after war.

A retired Army veteran with more than 14 deployments throughout the Eastern hemisphere, Thill calls horticulture therapeutic – a way to tamp down the anxiety and migraines that come with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries tied to combat.

These days, with help from several government grants and agencies like the Vocational Rehabilitation Services division of Iowa Workforce Development, growing

and tending plants also has become a promising business.

Thill, who left the military to settle on family land near Algona, hopes to officially welcome customers next year to **Farmer Sarge's Orchard**, his 3.5-acre property featuring apples, peaches, pears, cherries, apricots, and plums. Thill spent this past year earning praise through the sale of sweet corn, a variety of fruits, craft items, and freeze-dried ice creams and candies at nearby farmer's markets. With luck, his 450 trees will be productive enough next year to welcome actual visitors to pick fruit on his property.

It will be the culmination of a lot of work and helpful support.

Trish Cady, rehabilitation counselor with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, said the division's Self-Employment Program helped Thill purchase a large mower for his orchard, as well as time with marketing consultants who are helping design logos, packaging, and a website. Thill, who had already been receiving similar assistance from the U.S. Veterans Administration, had been developing his business for several years while working for a nearby Co-Op, she said.

"He was very well-prepared, and we're just adding to that," Cady said.

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# O\*Net = Powerful Tool for Job Seekers

The title of Joseph Pittman's presentation says it all: the "Power of O\*Net."

"People don't know that this resource is available to them," explains Pittman, RESEA program coordinator at the IowaWORKS office in Des Moines. "It really is here to help people open their eyes about the possibilities."

What is O\*Net? In short, says Pittman, a very valuable tool.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, [the](#)



## ADA Coordinators Help Businesses Solve Accessibility Issues

Recent success placing clients from the Vocational Rehabilitation Services division of Iowa Workforce Development at a Dubuque museum has sparked a much broader relationship between the two entities – and prompted Vocational Rehabilitation to expand a valuable new service.

Vocational Rehabilitation staff members recently completed specialized training and testing to become Certified ADA Coordinators – experts who will be able to help Iowa businesses and organizations improve both programmatic and physical access for Iowans with disabilities.

The staff members are now certified to evaluate workplaces for compliance with the Americans with

[database](#) includes hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptions for nearly 1,000 jobs.

IowaWORKS career planners encourage all recipients of unemployment benefits to visit the site as part of the job search process, and Pittman regularly teaches an online workshop to explain O\*Net.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

Disabilities Act (ADA) and guide organizations on how to better accommodate the public and/or potential employees with disabilities.

Michelle Krefft, Disability Engagement bureau chief for the Business Engagement division of Iowa Workforce Development, said the new ADA coordinators (and others that are still in the process of getting certified) will help companies put their best foot forward. Just as importantly, the new training will help ensure that the lowans with disabilities who go to the Vocational Rehabilitation Services division of IWD seeking career assistance will be able to work in the best possible environment.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

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- Connect with IowaWORKS staff



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## Learn by Listening



More than 35,000 downloads so far by listeners around the world. Hosts Ben Oldach and Kathy Leggett will introduce you to a host of workforce programs and people making a difference.

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## **SkillBridge: A New Way to Help Military Find Jobs in Iowa after Service Ends**



Iowa employers have a new tool available to help them add military Veterans to their workforce.

Iowa Workforce Development recently was approved to become a third-party administrator for SkillBridge, a U.S. Department of Defense program that places military service members in civilian jobs for up to the last six months of their tours of duty. The program was created to help transitioning service members gain the necessary civilian training to land in fruitful careers when they leave the armed services.

For employers in Iowa and elsewhere, SkillBridge provides a very low-risk way of

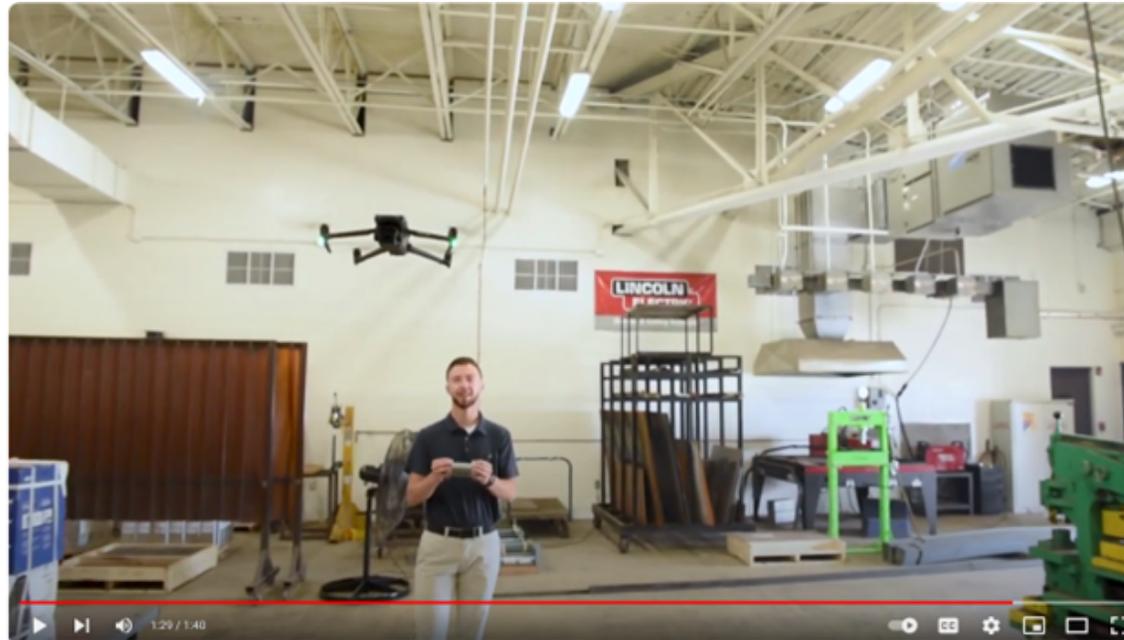
tapping into a pool of hard-working, mission-driven employees. The Defense Department continues to pay the salary and benefits for service people in the program, and employers are under no obligation to hire anyone.

“Veterans are a perfect match for our state’s work ethic and hardworking culture,” said Iowa Governor Kim Rynolds. “SkillBridge is another tool we can use to recruit those service members to Iowa and show them firsthand the opportunities that come with living and working in a state where you have the freedom to flourish.”

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

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## VIDEO: Voc Rehab Unlocks Opportunity



Anthony Reyman parlayed his lifelong love of planes into a fulltime career after graduating from Indian Hills Community College. He did so with significant help from a Vocational Rehabilitation program that supports self-employment for lowans with disabilities. [Click the image above](#) to watch or video or visit [IWD's blog page](#) to read a longer account of Reyman's story.

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## Upcoming Events / Opportunities

IOWAWORKS  
**Holiday Hours**

Wednesday - Nov. 23	Closed
Thursday - Nov. 24	Closed
Friday - Nov. 24	Closed
Monday - Nov. 27	8:00am - 4:30pm
Friday - Dec. 22	8:00am - 4:30pm
Monday - Dec. 25	Closed
Tuesday - Dec. 26	Closed
Wednesday - Dec. 27	9:00am - 4:30pm
Monday - Jan. 1	Closed
Tuesday - Jan. 2	8:00am - 4:30pm

Visit our website 24/7



workforce.iowa.gov

**Occupational Skills Trainings**  
January - June 2024

- ✔ **Guest Service Gold** - Jan. 8 - Jan. 12 (M-F 9am-11am)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Hospitality Maintenance** - Jan. 15 - Feb. 16 (M-F 9am-11am)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Guest Service Gold** - Jan. 22 - Jan. 26 (M-F 9am-11am)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Hospitality Guest Room** - Jan. 29 - Feb. 23 (M-F 9am-11am)
- ✔ **ServSafe Food Handler** - Feb. 26 - March 8 (M-F 12pm-2pm)  
\*\*Independent study options available
- ✔ **Certified Technician** - March 18 - April 26 (M-F 9:30am-11:30am)  
\*\*Must be person of their own finding and choice
- ✔ **Guest Service Gold** - April 1 - April 5 (M-F 12pm-2pm)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Hospitality Front Desk** - April 8 - May 2 (M-F 12pm-2pm)
- ✔ **Guest Service Gold** - May 6 - May 10 (M-F 12pm-2pm)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Hospitality Guest Room** - May 13 - June 7 (M-F 9am-11am)
- ✔ **Guest Service Gold** - June 17 - June 21 (M-F 9am - 11am)  
\*\*Prerequisite to all Hospitality trainings
- ✔ **Hospitality Food Service** - June 24 - Aug. 2 (M-F 9am-11am)
- ✔ **Northstar Digital Literacy** - Ongoing at all locations

For course descriptions and more information go to:  
[www.ceritfiedforsuccess.org](http://www.ceritfiedforsuccess.org)

**HOT JOB**

# ALERT

CLINTON COUNTY IS HIRING A  
SECRETARY I POSITION. PAY RANGE  
\$19-23/HR

**APPLY NOW!**



Clinton County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Minorities and women are encouraged to apply. For more information, please contact the Human Resources Department at 515-783-2222 or visit our website at [www.clintoncountyia.gov](http://www.clintoncountyia.gov).

**NIACC BUSINESS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**

**JOB expo**

Wednesday, April 3, 2024  
11:00AM - 3:00 PM  
150 - 180 PM  
NIACC Operations

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Start by promoting job opportunities and connecting with potential candidates at the NIACC job fair.

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Apply online!  
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**WHAT CAN SANTA BRING YOUR BUSINESS IN 2024?**

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Connect with a Business Services Consultant to tailor solutions that meet your needs effectively. Act today for business success!



These solutions represent our program services and are not intended to constitute any form of insurance or financial product. For more information, please contact your insurance broker or financial advisor. © 2024 IowaWORKS. All rights reserved.



**IOWA.** Iowa Workforce  
Development  
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**HiSET.**