

Transition Connection Brings Together Job Seekers and Industry Wanting Workers



Navy Lt. j.g. Sarena Padilla and Eric Padilla participate in Transition Connection, a first-time hiring event that debuted at Sea-Air-Space 2021. *SOLARES PHOTOGRAPHY*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – In the three years that Navy Lt. j.g. Sarena Padilla and Eric Padilla have been married, they've lived in four different states. Sarena has changed her career from a nuclear officer to a meteorology and oceanography research officer, which necessitated the moves. But now that she's ensconced at the U.S. National Ice Center in Suitland, Maryland, the couple is looking to settle down. And that means a more permanent job for Eric.

Eric, who has a physics and engineering background, took advantage of Sea-Air-Space's inaugural Transition Connection hiring event on Tuesday. Military members, spouses and civilians had the opportunity to interact with more than a dozen companies, and were also able to upload their resumes and virtually chat with potential employers through the Transition Connection page on the Sea-Air-Space website.

"I've had contract jobs during our marriage, but it's been hard to find opportunities to further my career," said Eric, who's interested in space-oriented work. "It's been great to be able to talk to potential employers about my career intentions."

Employers said there has been plenty of interest in their companies. Gianna Lamanna of Manassas, Virginia-based Hepburn and Sons said her company, which does advisory work for the maritime industry, received about 150 resumes through the Transition Connection portal prior to the hiring event. She

and her Bill Lewis colleague conducted back-to-back job interviews throughout the day.

“We really appreciate the opportunity to meet with so many people,” Lamanna said. “To have a [show like Sea-Air-Space] with a connected hiring event is unique.”

Lamanna estimated that about 75% of the people who sent her resumes are either planning or thinking about transitioning out of the military to civilian life.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Collin Fox is one of those potential transitioners. Fox, who has served for 17 years, most recently in the Navy Foreign Area, comes from a military family. Both his father and grandfather served, and Fox is certainly open to continuing his career after he hits the 20-year mark. But Transition Connection gave him opportunity to evaluate civilian career options as well.

“I do a lot of writing, so I’m interested in jobs that involve analysis and concept development,” he said.

At the Amazon booth, one of the recruiters had firsthand experience in moving from military to civilian life. Madeleine Caballero served in the Army for two and a half years before retiring for medical reasons.

“I understand how hard the transition can be,” she said. “I had someone tell me today how anxious they are.”

Amazon is committed to hiring 100,000 military veterans and spouses by 2024, Caballero said. The company currently employs more than 43,000 veterans and spouses in areas such as operations, human resources, safety, onsite medical facilities and Amazon Web Services.

Not all of the job seekers at Transition Connection were military, however. Faisal Munshi, who works in marine engineering, moved to the United States from India four months

ago. He found the Transition Connection event on LinkedIn and decided to attend with his wife, Afroz Indorewla, a health information management student at Northern Virginia Community College.

“This is the first job fair I’ve been to since I moved to the U.S.,” Munshi said. “I’ve found many opportunities in my industry.”