

200 Veterans Graduate into Workforce from Texas Trade School

DALLAS, TX (February 16, 2017) – Friday, February 17, nationally-recognized veterans advocate, Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), will deliver the keynote address to the graduating class of over 200 veterans at Retail Ready Career Center ([RRCC](#)). Rieckhoff, who founded IAVA to focus on the needs of returning Post-9/11 veterans and their families after himself returning from Iraq, will congratulate the graduates and their families, celebrate their personal stories and underscore the importance of technical training and the Post-9/11 GI Bill in ensuring America's veterans enter the workforce prepared.

"These dedicated men and women are America's next greatest generation. Their dedication and tenacity represents the very best of the Texas spirit and American ingenuity. In tough times, you need tough people. And these graduates of Retail Ready are the tough people our country and our economy need right now. Smart employers big and small will jump at the opportunity to have these folks join their team. They are not a charity, they're an investment. Retail Ready is leading the way, graduating more than 2,000 veterans since its founding, and America should take notice."

The graduation ceremony will take place on Friday at 3 PM at Eddie Deen's Ranch in Dallas. The graduating class boasts veterans from 35 states and graduates range in age from 19 to 55. More than 50 students in the graduating class have already accepted job opportunities, paving the way for successful careers.

Led by CEO Jon Davis, RRCC recruits transitioning military and Post-9/11 veterans for an intense 5-day a week program modeled after military training methodology. After the 6-week program, veterans can become certified for careers as HVAC technicians. RRCC Job Placement Specialists work closely with heating and air contractors, manufacturers and distributors to place students who have completed the program.

The Retail Ready Career Center is certified by the State of Texas Career Schools and Colleges, and is approved for GI Bill education benefits. The Retail Ready program was created as part of the 2008 Post-9/11 "New" GI Bill, [which drafted and passed thanks to IAVA's leadership](#).

After the ceremony, Rieckhoff and IAVA will host the graduates and their families for a "VetTogether" celebration with IAVA Board Chairman, Army Ranger Scott Feldmayer, Dallas IAVA leader and former fighter pilot, Jeff Hensley, and vets and allies from across the state at Equest, a therapeutic riding center that provides services to veterans and other individuals that have dealt with trauma.

WHAT: Graduation Ceremony for Retail Ready Career Center's January 9th class,

followed by DFW VetTogether

WHEN: Friday, February 17 th, 3-5 PM

WHERE: Eddie Deen's Ranch, 944 South Lamar St., Dallas, TX 75202

WHO: Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Please email press@iava.org to RSVP for the availability or if additional accommodations might be necessary for an interview around the event.

Paul Rieckhoff is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), America's first and largest organization for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. From 2003 to 2004, Rieckhoff served as an Army First Lieutenant and infantry rifle platoon leader in Iraq.

Rieckhoff enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves in 1998 and then served in the U.S. Army Reserves. While working on Wall Street at J.P. Morgan in 1999, Rieckhoff transferred to the New York Army National Guard. He left Wall Street on September 7, 2001 with plans to travel and complete additional military schooling. Those plans would change dramatically when on the morning of September 11th he heard the first plane hit the World Trade Center. Seeing the smoke from his rooftop, Rieckhoff immediately joined scores of volunteers serving in the rescue effort at Ground Zero. In February 2002, Rieckhoff began Infantry Officers Basic Course and in January 2003 Rieckhoff received the call to deploy to Iraq.

Rieckhoff is a nationally recognized authority on the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and a broad range of issues affecting troops, veterans and their families, Rieckhoff has appeared on hundreds of television and radio programs. His first book, "Chasing Ghosts", was a critically-acclaimed account of his experiences in Iraq and advocacy on behalf of veterans.