

## Marine helicopter pilot finds new career in sheet metal trade



Arizona native and second-year sheet metal apprentice Tyson Alexander felt a call to serve after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

After attending the University of Arizona on a ROTC scholarship and majoring in History, Alexander became a Marine Corps helicopter pilot and eventually attained the rank of Captain. Alexander served his country across the globe and was part of Operation Inherent Resolve – the operation against ISIS – during his Marine Corps career.

At the end of his service, Alexander looked for a career where he could use his hands. He contemplated joining the police department or learning a trade.

The Helmets to Hardhats program placed him in the Arizona Sheet Metal Joint Apprentice Training Center, which is designed to educate and train the most qualified Sheet Metal Workers in the industry.

“The Helmets to Hardhats programs is an invaluable resource for us to find the best pool of talent and ensure the heroes who served our country can learn valuable new skills,” said Carol L. Goguen, executive director of the Arizona Chapter of the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA), an organization of contractors that lead the heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry by setting the highest standards of performance, service, and safety.

“A lot of my brothers and sisters from the Marine Corps have found the same type of comradery in the trades as we did on active duty,” Alexander said.

Alexander is looking to the future and constantly improving himself. He is considering using his GI bill to complete a master’s degree, likely in business administration. He sees the leadership skills he learned in the Marines and his education at the Arizona Sheet Metal Joint Apprentice Training Center one day leading him into the project management field.

“Comparing the Sheet Metal JATC with other programs was like night and day,” he said. “The pay, benefits, and quality of instruction were no comparison to other programs.”

The Arizona Sheet Metal program is a five year program, that consists of on-the-job training and college accredited classes through the American Council on Education.