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NEWS RELEASE

November 2, 2007

Employment Red Carpet Rolled Out for Area Veterans

Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center provides complimentary services to help veterans gain viable employment and ease transition to civilian life.

Phoenix, Ariz. – Maricopa Workforce Connections' Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center assists veterans in securing viable employment upon reentry to civilian life. On-site veteran specialists provide guidance on accessing many state and federal programs as well as one-on-one vocational assistance.

Recently separated veterans may return to civilian life with different aspirations and skill sets than prior to their military service. Recognizing returning veterans' distinct needs, Maricopa Workforce Connections opened the Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center in September 2007. The unique design of the center integrates and enriches the valley's existing veteran services, incorporates online resources and e-tools and provides additional support services in the areas of mental health, housing, and transitional needs.

"Today's job market is experiencing the emergence of a new type of job seeker; recently separated military personnel," said Patrick Burkhart, assistant director, Workforce Development Division, Maricopa County Human Services Department, which operates Maricopa Workforce Connections. Veterans returning home after serving our country, often times overseas, face an array of unique challenges in addition to readjusting to civilian life. "These dedicated individuals boast qualities desired by most employers as well as highly-specialized skill sets that, once matched with an appropriate industry or position, make the individual a highly sought after future employee."

Often veterans who gained specific skills and experience in the military are prevented from obtaining equivalent civilian employment due to state or federal licensing or certification requirements. Others may wish to access benefits of the GI Bill but are unclear on the process. The Elijah Wong Veterans Center (1840 95th Avenue, Ste. 160, Phoenix, AZ 85037) has fulltime staff dedicated to working one-on-one with veterans to explore solutions to these dilemmas, identify employment opportunities, and gain access to other necessary immediate transitional services.

Veterans needing vocational assistance, and local businesses seeking employees with the dedication and specialized skills of our country's veterans, are encouraged to contact Justin Dahlgren at the Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center for a consultation (PH: 602/372-4260, e-mail: jdahlgren@mail.maricopa.gov). On-site veteran specialists are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Contact: Dawn Zimmer at (602) 506-4838, or by e-mail at zimmerd@mail.maricopa.gov

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Page 2

About MWC

Maricopa Workforce Connections (MWC) promotes and facilitates strategic alliances among public and private stakeholders within the Maricopa County to ensure workforce excellence and contribute to the economic vitality for area employers, incumbent and future workers. MWC is a division of the Maricopa County Human Services Department. Services are made possible via funding through the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Most services are provided to the community free of charge.

About the Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center

The veterans' services center, named in honor of Maricopa Adult Probation Officer and fallen Arizona National Guardsman Sgt. Elijah Wong, who died serving in Iraq, provides services solely to veterans and their families.

Located within the Maricopa Workforce Connections West Valley Career Center, 1840 N. 95th Avenue in Phoenix, Arizona, 85037, the Elijah Wong Veterans Services Center provides veterans and their families with a personal guide to navigate and access many state and federal veterans programs; links to housing and immediate transitional services; and one-on-one vocational assistance.