

Veteran-Owned Business certification gives boost to local companies

By Gina Joseph gjoseph@digitalfirstmedia.com

Feb 10, 2019



Randy Hosler, President of Progressive Mechanical and a U.S. Army veteran, right, along with his nephew and Executive Vice President of Progressive Mechanical, Charly Hosler study a blueprint in the company's Mount Clemens office.

After years of working for others, Charly Hosler and Randy Hosler decided to leave their jobs and start their own company.

Progressive Mechanical, founded in 2006, provides mechanical plumbing, process piping and fire protection installation for industrial, commercial, institutional and governmental projects.

"We do it all from start to finish, including maintenance," said Charly, who resides in Royal Oak with his wife Andi. Charly is Randy's nephew.

In 2014, they became certified through Veterans Affairs and added certification as a veteran-owned business (VOB) through the National Veteran Business Development Council in 2017.

The company has offices in Ferndale and Mount Clemens.

Certification as a VOB has its privileges.

Those privileges include knowing about the government work that's available, although still have to competitively bid on every project and no work is given to them just because of their VOB certification.

"It may be a factor in the decision to hire them but it isn't the only factor," said Rany, a Persian Gulf veteran as a reconnaissance scout who lives in Macomb County's Harrison Township.

Charly concurred.

"As a certified VOB, Progressive Mechanical relies on union talent to achieve the attention to detail the company is known for," Charly said. "The depth of commitment to customers is profound. Everyone in the nearly 100-person company has a 'go and do' attitude, committed to getting every job done no matter what it takes."

Charly inherited his get-it-done approach from his father, who is Randy's brother.

Randy was specially trained, to gather, distribute and share vital combat and battlefield information on the enemy and on battlefield conditions, which is also why reconnaissance scouts are commonly referred to as the "eyes and ears" of the Army.

All three of his older brothers served in Vietnam. So, it's no surprise that after graduating from L'Anse Creuse High School in 1989 that he would follow their lead and enlist in the U.S. Army.

After serving in the military from 1989 to 1993), Randy returned home with all of the traits that come with military experience — leadership skills, loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. He could have attended college then, but decided to go to work for his wife Lisa's father.

"She was my high school sweetheart. Her father was a pipefitter," Hosler said, during an interview at Progressive Mechanical, attended by his nephew and co-owner of the company, Charly Hosler.

Certification

There are several steps involved in becoming a certified Veteran-Owned Business (VOB) beginning with verification through the VA.

According to the National Veteran Business Development Council In order to become certified, applicants must be a veteran of a branch of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard, and have served a minimum of 180 consecutive days in an active-duty capacity, although there are some exceptions.

Applicants must also be U.S. citizens and honorably discharged or discharged under honorable conditions.

Veterans who are interested in applying for certification need to submit an application along with detailed supporting documents that verify veteran status and 51 percent veteran ownership and control of a business. Service Disabled Veterans must also submit their annual disability letter from the VA.

By the numbers

According to the Census Bureau's 2016 Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs, there were 379,620 veteran-owned employer businesses in the U.S.

Overall, 6.8 percent of all employer businesses were majority owned by one or more veterans.

Veteran-owned businesses employ 4.2 million workers, amass \$901 billion in total annual receipts, and contribute approximately \$182 billion in total annual payroll.

While there are veterans who own large companies, 99.9 percent are small business owners, a classification given to companies that employ 500 workers or less.

In Michigan, 71,861 businesses were veteran-owned, according to the last survey of business owners by the U.S. Census, ranking the state 11th. That same survey lists 10,021 veteran-owned business in Oakland County, or about eight percent of the total number of businesses in the county.

By gender, 84.3 percent of veteran-owned businesses nationally are male-owned and 15.2 percent are female-owned.

By age nationally, 74 percent of the veteran owners are age 55 or older.

Success

Veteran-owned businesses tend to do well.

Progressive Mechanical began with a \$2 million year-end revenue and grew to \$68 million within 10 years.

"This is a \$20 million project we completed for Chrysler," Randy said, looking over a blueprint showing the work done by his staff which includes other Hosler family members and at least 10 veterans.

"We are actively looking to hire more," Randy said, of the veterans he has on staff, whose dedication is rewarded through activities like the annual chili cook-off in March or team-building activities that add to the company's camaraderie. "If you come with the right attitude and mindset we will train you.

"That's how Charly and I started," he added.