



## Company answers the Bell to put veterans to work



When Matthew Bell started in the construction industry after 20 years of military service, he noticed similarities between the techniques used by construction workers and members of the military. It was not the physical abilities, but rather the traits and values veterans learned while serving their country.

"I quickly saw that veterans are a good fit for jobs in construction," said Bell, owner of U.S. Vet General Contracting in McFarland. "In the military you are trained to look at the whole picture, work on something until the job is finished and handle challenges without losing sight of the goals. All of those traits can help you be a success in the construction industry."

After Bell's own military career he began

studying to be an architect, but soon found he enjoyed hands-on construction work better. After working at several other construction companies, he started U.S. Vet in 2010. A certified service disabled veteran-owned business, U.S. Vet received the 2015 Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. Governor's Award for Outstanding Small Service Disabled Veteran Business.

From the beginning, Bell focused on hiring veterans. Forty percent of the company's employees are military veterans.

"I knew I wanted to reach out to veterans. The Helmets to Hardhat program helps military vets find construction trade jobs and I linked up with them to find talent, as well as working on my own," Bell said. "The construction workforce is aging and many will retire in the next few years and we need workers to replace them. At the same time, there are many veterans looking for well-paying jobs. It is a good fit."

While U.S. Vet works on commercial and

private projects, the company found its niche working for the U.S. Veterans Administration at various sites across Wisconsin. In 2017, 90 percent of the company's work was through Veteran Administration projects.

"It is remarkable the work U.S. Vets does building facilities that contribute to the quality care veterans deserve for so nobly protecting our country," said Laura Cataldo, manager of construction and real estate for Baker Tilly Virchow Krause in Madison, who has worked with Bell.

Bell said veterans learn loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage — traits that will help employees in any job. He said another trait learned in the military — teamwork — is also essential in construction.

"You are all working towards a goal. Veterans know how to put teamwork into practice on the job site," Bell said.

— MaryBeth Matzek

**VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**  
**US Vet General Contracting**