STORY OF IMPACT
VETERANS FIND PURPOSE, CAMARADERIE THROUGH JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

A workforce training program is connecting veterans with more than just a job. It's giving them a sense of purpose – and building community.

For over a decade, the **Utility Workers Military Assistance Program (UMAP)** has supported more than 750 veterans in pursuing sustainable careers in the utility sector. Locally, the robust six-month classroom curriculum is offered in partnership with City Colleges of Chicago, providing veterans with the skills they need to succeed.

"We've helped mold many new careers for our service veterans," said Ray Tischina, UMAP instructor and veterans' outreach and recruitment coordinator. "On a daily basis for six months, we see them for a full day of school. It's very enlightening to see them progress."

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>
> **JACK TORNABENE**
> **UMAP Graduate,** Peoples Gas Journeyman Utility Worker, and U.S. Army First Lieutenant Reservist

UMAP graduates take what they've learned in the classroom and apply these skills on site at a one-month paid internship in the gas sector. Locally, in the Chicago region, they are guaranteed employment with Peoples Gas. Plus, they can use their utility certificate to apply for any UWUA Local job across the country in the electrical, water, gas, and renewable energy sectors.

"UMAP graduates have gone on to have great opportunities with Peoples Gas and through the Utility Workers Union of America," Ray said. "It's very fulfilling to see these veterans go to the next level in their careers."

A graduate's career success is only possible thanks to UMAP's wraparound support for students, including mentorship from fellow veterans and mental health resources. This holistic approach is especially critical for veterans, says Jack Tornabene, a UMAP graduate and current journeyman utility worker with Peoples Gas. Jack is also a reservist as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

"There are a lot of things veterans don't want to talk about, and it's easier to talk about it with your peers," Jack said. "So when you get into programs like UMAP, they really facilitate the peer-to-peer support and provide a sense of camaraderie."

Jason L. Carter, president of the Utility Workers Union of America Local 18007, says mental health support is especially important for success on the job. "We want to make sure that everyone, including veterans, has the help they need to thrive," Jason said. "It's so important to bring in veterans to mentor

fellow veterans. The peer-to-peer piece of UMAP really helps students open up and best assist them."

Jason supports utility workers through his leadership of UWUA Local 18007, which is a key partner of UMAP, along with Peoples Gas, City Colleges of Chicago, and the Chicago Federation of Labor's Workforce & Community Initiative – supported by United Way of Metro Chicago.

Thanks to this collaborative, cross-sector partnership, UMAP has helped hundreds of veterans transition from active-duty service to sustainable and fulfilling civilian jobs. Work that truly makes a difference, ensuring power is safely reaching households across the Chicago region.

"UMAP gives veterans a sense of purpose, to protect life and property," Jack said. "With that purpose, it makes it so much easier for veterans to move forward. When you get out in the field, you feel good about what you're doing. That purpose is what drives you through, and it's fantastic."

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