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Contact Person: Natasha Serra, SELF, Community Outreach Coordinator

Telephone Number: (772) 468-1818 / Email Address: natashas@solarenergyloanfund.org

Green Veterans and SELF Join Forces for Community Revitalization and Workforce Development



Brian Sales, Green Veterans, USGBC

The Green Veterans Group, an initiative of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) South Florida Chapter, has joined forces with the non-profit Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF) to create a new Community Revitalization and Workforce Development program that focuses on “Veterans Helping Veterans”.

The overall goal of the partnership is twofold. First, the program will enable veterans to complete home energy improvements and make structural repairs to their homes, including high-efficiency air conditioners, windows, doors and roofs. These improvements will help lower energy and insurance bills, provide greater hurricane resistance, and enhance comfort and livability. Second, the home improvements will be completed by other veterans who are participating in the on-the-job training program offered by the Green Veterans Group. Through the pilot program, veterans will perform the assorted home improvement work for other veterans.

According to Brian Sales, a proud veteran and co-founder of the Green Veterans program, “Our goal is to help veterans with job training and employment opportunities, while also helping other veterans in the process with much needed home repairs and upgrades.” He added, “We want to ease the hardship of military-to-civilian transition by empowering veterans through job training and entrepreneurship.”

Graduates from the Green Veterans Sustainability Training Program will provide the initial energy assessments for each house and also perform assorted home improvements for homeowners. Two SELF-approved contractors, SunCool Energy and the Venergy Group, are already collaborating with the Green Veterans Group. Sales said, "We are excited that our partnership with SELF can foster job training

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and employment opportunities for veterans, and we are particularly pleased to now be able to help other veterans in the process.”

SELF is a non-profit community lending institution that provides energy expertise, favorable financing, and project management for home energy improvements and wind-hazard mitigation projects. SELF won the Green Business of the Year Award last year from the USGBC South Florida Chapter, and has committed to raising low-interest rate loan capital for these home improvement projects. SELF’s Executive Director, Doug Coward, said, “We are excited to partner with the Green Veterans Group to help create jobs and complete much-needed home improvements for veterans”.

Melanie Robles-Ruef, SELF’s Regional Program Manager and the mother of two active-duty service members, will oversee the project for the non-profit organization. "We are extremely pleased to facilitate this Veterans Helping Veterans program. There is no doubt in my mind that this partnership will help veterans develop job skills and create new employment opportunities.” said Ruef. “The program will also help other veterans make cost-effective home improvements that can cut future operating costs and improve the structural integrity of their homes.”



Melanie Robles-Ruef, SELF

The U.S. Green Building Council South Florida Chapter, a nonprofit (501[c][3]) organization, embraces the adoption of innovative building practices that conserve land, energy, water, resources and materials. Its mission is to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling a sustainable and socially responsible, healthy and prosperous environment for people to live, work, learn and play. The Green Veterans Group is one of several initiatives embraced by the nonprofit organization.

To learn more about the “Veterans Helping Veterans” program, please visit the organizations online or contact individual project team members:

Green Veterans Group (GVG)
Brian Sales / Jonathan Burgess
(561) 351-0178 / (401) 465-8250
www.usgbcsof.org/greenvets

USGBC
Lee Cooke
(561) 373-7367
www.usgbcsof.org

Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF)
Melanie Ruef / Natasha Serra / Doug Coward
(772) 468-1818
www.solarenergyloanfund.org