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Florida's Great Northwest
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**FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST AWARDS GRANT TO OPPORTUNITY
FLORIDA TO MARKET INNOVATIVE WEBSITE**

Destin, Florida (May 1, 2008) – Florida's Great Northwest, Inc. has awarded Opportunity Florida a grant in the amount of \$102,800. This grant award will serve to promote Opportunity Florida's newly developed MyFloridaMilitary.com website in the Northwest Florida region and throughout the country. This grant award is funded by Florida's Great Northwest's WIRED (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) Northwest Florida Initiative.

Opportunity Florida is the regional economic development organization serving eight rural counties in Northwest Florida: Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington. Opportunity Florida's development of the MyFloridaMilitary.com website is aimed at connecting the technical talent of military personnel, active military spouses, veterans and BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) dislocated workers that are transitioning out of the armed services with regional employers in search of personnel with those skills. This site is being launched in partnership with Opportunity Florida, Florida's Great Northwest and all five of Northwest Florida's workforce boards.

Al Wenstrand, President of Florida's Great Northwest stated, "Military separations represent a quality and technologically savvy workforce that is in high demand by companies in Northwest Florida. MyFloridaMilitary.com provides an innovative mechanism to facilitate connecting this potential workforce to the high-wage, high-skill employment opportunities in the area."

"Members of the military come into the civilian workforce with a multitude of highly technical and valuable skills. We want to ensure they remain in the area to enhance the quality of our workforce," added Gary Clark, Opportunity Florida Board Chairman. "And

besides that, we owe them. This site is just one small way of showing our appreciation for all they have done.”

The website provides a number of valuable resources and tools for those transitioning from the military and seeking employment. One of the features incorporated into the MyFloridaMilitary.com site is a secure message board that allows both employers and prospective employees to communicate directly, while protecting their respective identities until such a time disclosure is agreed upon by both parties. In addition, the site provides job-search resources such as formatted resumes, form letters and links to many state and federal agency job listings, as well as numerous related internet links beneficial to the job seeker.

“It is important that we work closely with regional economic development organizations,” said Susan Nelms, Executive Director of Workforce Escarosa, the workforce board serving Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties.

“We are very excited about this new website,” said Kim Bodine, Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Workforce Center which serves Bay, Gulf and Franklin Counties. “It will enhance our work and enable us to better meet the needs of the military families in the region. It will also help employers find the many high-skilled workers they need,” Bodine added.

Mary Lou Reed, Executive Director, Workforce Development Board of Okaloosa and Walton counties states, “This site provides some very unique marketing resources. The site will better market America’s true heroes to the businesses that really do want to find and hire them.”

"MyFloridaMilitary.com is a great tool to help our best and brightest businesses connect with our best and brightest workers," said Richard Williams, Executive Director of Chipola Regional Workforce Board which serves Calhoun, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington Counties.

This is a great opportunity to provide enhanced services to our veteran community," said Kimberly Moore, Executive Director of Workforce Plus which serves Leon, Gadsden and Wakulla Counties. “The rollout of the website serves as a symbol of our ongoing commitment to providing resources that will enable veterans along with their families to successfully transition back into the workforce. Additionally, it's a great opportunity for employers to select from an expanded pool of skilled candidates known for their dedication," Moore added.

Florida’s Great Northwest, Inc. is the administrator and facilitating organization for the U.S. Department of Labor WIRED Grant. Florida’s Great Northwest WIRED Northwest Florida Initiative is designed to create high-wage, high-skill jobs within the region in the target industries of Aviation, Aerospace, Defense, and National Security; Life Sciences

(Human Performance Enhancement, Medical Device Manufacturing, Medical Technologies, Health Services, and Biotechnology); Information Technology; Engineering; Renewable Energy and Environment; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; and Construction Products Manufacturing.

Florida's Great Northwest is a regional economic development organization serving 16 counties in Northwest Florida from Pensacola through Tallahassee. Its primary mission is the creation of high-wage, high-skill jobs, branding and marketing, as well as support of the local economic and workforce development organizations in the region.

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