



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Judy Iannaccone
Director, Communications
Phone: (714) 480-7503
e-mail: iannaccone_judy@rsccd.edu

August 29, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Soldiers to Scholars Reception Benefits Veterans Programs at Santa Ana and Santiago Canyon Colleges *September 15th Event Supports the Service of Veteran Students*

(Santa Ana)—As Americans remember the tragedy of 9/11 on its tenth anniversary, military veterans returning to Orange County are struggling to transition to civilian life. Many of them are taking advantage of Veterans' Assistance educational benefits. Last year, there were 532 veterans enrolled in classes at [Rancho Santiago Community College District's](#) colleges, [Santa Ana College \(SAC\)](#) and [Santiago Canyon College \(SCC\)](#).

To raise funds to provide needed services for these returning veterans, the college district is hosting a Soldiers to Scholars Reception on Thursday, September 15 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Santa Ana College Orange County Sheriff's Regional Training Academy, 15991 Armstrong Ave., Tustin, CA., 92782.

Among the district's veterans is 25-year-old Raymond Nava, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps where he served as a lance corporal in the infantry. He was deployed twice—once to Iraq for seven months and the second time with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) until 2009. With the 31st MEU, he traveled to Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Cambodia providing security for humanitarian missions.

Now at Santa Ana College, Nava has his sights on earning an associate degree in business administration and entering the college's Fire Academy. He then wants to transfer to Cal State Fullerton to get a bachelor's degree in business administration. He hopes to become a firefighter and dreams of opening his own restaurant later in life.

For Nava, as with many returning veterans, the transition to life as a college student has been hard. "In the military, they micromanage you—they tell you what to do," says Nava. "As a student, you have to figure out what to do."

When he first enrolled at SAC in 2009, the Veterans Resource Center, which opened in 2010, was not yet available. He says it took him about three days to get his bearings—to figure out how to sign up for classes and how to obtain his benefits.

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“Today there’s a lot more guidance,” he says. “All the questions a veteran has are answered and if the Veterans Resource Center does not have the answer, they will contact the Veterans Administration and get the answer. It makes the process go a lot smoother. We have regular meetings and counseling sessions. You get to see familiar faces—fellow veterans—who have experienced some of the same things you have.”

The colleges’ Veteran Resource Centers (VRCs) provide the following services:

- Access to a Certifying Official to assist veterans with accessing Veterans Assistance (VA) educational benefits,
- Specialized academic counseling to develop educational plans to meet VA benefit requirements,
- Customized orientation and academic skills workshops for veterans, and
- Quiet study area with access to computers, the Internet and a printer.

Other programs and services available to veterans through the VRCs include: priority registration, accommodations for veterans with disabilities, distance learning, Board of Governors fee waivers, in-state tuition waivers, access to the college's child development centers, work study/campus job opportunities, and health and wellness services.

The Soldiers to Scholars Reception will include live music, a short program featuring veterans, complimentary non-alcoholic beverages, wine tasting, and hors d'oeuvres. Reservations are available for \$50 per person; corporate sponsorships are available for \$5,000. The title sponsor, which generously donated \$50,000, is SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union. Additional sponsors include Townsend Public Affairs; Seville Construction Services; and Kinsell, Newcomb & De Dios, Inc. For more information, contact (714) 480-7450 or visit www.soldiers2scholars.org.

About the Rancho Santiago Community College District

The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

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