

TURNING MILITARY EXPERIENCE INTO AN IRONWORKING CAREER



Finding the right candidate to become an ironworker these days can be challenging. We are all trying to find people that care about their work, care about one another and show up to work on time each day. One good source that continues to provide people with these qualities is Helmets to Hardhats. We want to introduce you to a young man named Connor Burley, a first six-month apprentice ironworker and member of Local Union 433 (Los Angeles).

Prior to becoming an apprentice, Connor served his country for four years in the United States Marine Corps and, upon his discharge, had reached the rank of corporal. We asked Connor what he felt were the most beneficial skills he learned while in the military? “My most beneficial skills that I took away from my military experience were time management, problem-solving abilities and good communication skills.” Connor added that he also learned the ability to work as part

of a team. The ability to work as part of a team is such an important trait in just about every walk of life, especially the skilled trades.

We asked Connor what he did initially once he was discharged from the Marines? “After I finished my contract, I used my GI Bill to attend the Orange Coast College and enrolled in their welding program.” While there, he earned an associate degree in science and welding technology. He also obtained his welder qualification in SMAW as well as his L.A. City welding license. When we asked Connor how he heard about Helmets to Hardhats, he informed us he heard about it during his transitional readiness seminar when he was beginning to transfer out of the Marine Corps.

We really wanted to know why Connor chose to enter the skilled trades. After finishing up his degree in college, he told us he wanted to take a little time to make sure he was making the right career decision. “I spent a lot



of time talking to my friends and colleagues and I came to the realization that I would be better suited and happier using my hands and working in the elements, as part of a team, as opposed to your typical 9-to-5 office job.” He told us that he was looking for a rewarding career. We also asked him what he felt were the top three benefits of joining the Iron Workers? “I feel that having the ability to work with a collective bargaining agreement, enjoy better working conditions and have a good pension program are all very important to me.” Being part of a team and feeling a strong sense of accomplishment is something all ironworkers feel when the job is completed. After all, we don’t go to the office; we build them!

Connor told us he’s very thankful to Helmets to Hardhats and his recruiter Quincy Lunford, the southwest regional manager for Helmets to Hardhats. Quincy helped recruit him into our trade and is also an ironworker and a member of Local 433.

Connor Burley is the type of young man we need in our trade and we are thankful to have him as well. Helmets to Hardhats is a great resource that can help us find other young men and women like Connor, who have not only proudly served their country but are now looking for a career. If your local union isn’t using H to H for recruiting purposes, you need to ask why not? Their website is helmetstohardhats.org. If you have any questions or need help, please contact General Organizer Ed Abbott at eabbott@iwintl.org.

Editor’s note: Job site photos were taken prior to the 2020 pandemic.



Ed Abbott
H to H Advisory Committee