

## **Welcome Home Celebration Reaches Out To Returning Veterans**

By VALERIE KALFRIN [Tampa Tribune](#) March 14, 2009

The University of South Florida Sun Dome opened its doors to returning veterans today for a free "welcome home" celebration that offered job opportunities and overviews of benefits.

The James A. Haley Veterans' Medical Center organized the event because some veterans are so relieved to get home, they don't pay attention to the wealth of information they're given about medical benefits and other insurance, said Nolan Hinson, program manager of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom at the medical center.

The medical center calls and mails wounded veterans it learns about through the Department of Defense but relies on veterans' organizations and other community outreach to connect with those in better health, Hinson said.

Lt. Col. Jeff Sickinger of the Army Reserves said the Army also reconnects with veterans about 90 days after their discharge to ensure they're up to speed on their benefits and gauge whether they need treatment for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The event coincided with another around the corner for those interested in the Individual Ready Reserve, which updates soldiers' records and does a post-deployment health check.

"We're trying to make sure they have knowledge of everything that's in their toolbox," said Brig. Gen. William D. Razz Waff of the Army's human resources command. "This is an added bonus: 212 companies that actively want to hire Army reservists today."

The companies included government contractors and law enforcement agencies.