

Torrance event aims to help South Bay veterans find work

By Nick Green Staff Writer

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While the nation's unemployment rate has fallen to the lowest level since April, it actually has increased for veterans who served in the military since 2001.

The October unemployment rate fell to 9 percent as the nation added 80,000 new jobs, the government said Friday.

But among Gulf War II veterans - two-thirds of whom are under the age of 35 - unemployment rose to 12.6 percent in October from 10.6 percent the same month the previous year. That's an increase of 39,000 unemployed veterans in that demographic group.

Todd Johnson, an economist in the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, drew parallels with the high youth unemployment rate to explain the similar pattern among young veterans.

For example, the unemployment rate among older veterans dropped to 7.2 percent last month from 8.6 percent the same month the previous year.

"Older Americans are taking jobs that otherwise they would not have done, shutting out folks who don't have that much experience," Johnson said. "There's been some talk in general about how the skill sets veterans have are not those that are leading to finding jobs."

Against that backdrop, the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce will host its first

Veterans Career & Resource Fair on Thursday, the day before Veterans Day.

"We have approximately 75 vendors who are offering a product or a service or a job opportunity to a veteran," said Donna Duperron, president and chief executive

officer of the chamber. "We are actually catering to both male and female veterans."

She hopes the event will draw as many as 500 veterans.

Statistics show an increasing number of jobless veterans are female, said Ranlyn Tilley Hill, executive director with nonprofit group Military Women in Need.

The nonprofit will be among those at the fair that will also include government contractors, staffing agencies and government agencies, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

More women than ever are being deployed, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. About 41,000 were deployed in the first Gulf War compared to 182,000 who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moreover, female veterans generally have a



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greater need for aid than their male counterparts.

About 11 percent are single parents compared to 4 percent of male veterans; median annual income for female veterans is about \$10,000 lower than men; and 20 percent of female veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with Military Sexual Trauma. The term refers to psychological trauma resulting from sexual assault, battery or harassment.

It's these statistics that prompted the nonprofit group to switch in July from only serving women veterans ages 55 or older to serving those of any age. It also changed from a foundation to a public charity, allowing it to access more resources to help the increasing number of women who need emergency financial assistance of some kind.

The group also is gearing up for an anticipated increase in those who need help next year, as the nation completes its military exit from Iraq and more armed forces personnel return to civilian life, Hill said.

"The transition for anyone, male or female, from military life to nonmilitary life regardless of whether they've been overseas or not is a challenging transition at best," she said. "So if you enhance that transition with the traumas people have experienced from numerous deployments ... you've got a formula for accelerated problems."

Want to go?

What: Veterans Career & Resource Fair, hosted by the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce.

When: 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Torrance Cultural Arts Center, 3330 Civic Center Drive.

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