



GENERAL MEAT TRADING, LLC

LOCATION:
PUERTO RICO

PHOTO:

Left to right: Roberto Delgado (AMSI Director of Administrative Affairs), Orlando Rivera (Special Projects Area Director), Joaquín Santiago-Santos (AMSI Executive Administrator), Rosalinda V. Maury, Alfonso Alcaide (GMT Human Resources Director), John Rio (National Vets TA Center), and Ana G. Arias, Villasuso, (Research and Development Area Director for AMSI and HVRP Program Manager).



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Despite an economy in Puerto Rico (PR) that challenges even job seekers without disabilities or histories of homelessness, GENERAL MEAT TRADING, LLC (GMT) is one organization that stands out for its leadership in hiring and supporting Puerto Rican Veterans who are homeless. Human Resources Director Alfonso Alcaide and his team are responsible for hiring personnel at GMT, a family-owned business that has been in operation for over 26 years, storing and distributing meat and other frozen and refrigerated products throughout PR. In Mr. Alcaide's words, contributing and giving back to the community is as much a part of the GMT philosophy as making sure that its business operations contribute to the corporate bottom line. GMT supports employees by providing support and flexibility while at the same time setting the bar high for standards that the corporation expects.

For over 6 years, Alianza Municipal de Servicios Integrados (AMSI, Inc.) worked closely with GMT as a placement employer for workers referred by its One Stop and were impressed by GMT and Mr. Alcaide's hiring philosophy. When AMSI was awarded its Homeless Veterans Reintegration Training and Placement Project Program (HVRP) two years ago, its staff met with Mr. Alcaide to identify jobs that their Veterans could fill at the San Juan distribution hub. Mr. Alcaide shared that it was difficult to retain workers in the cold storage area and hiring for those positions was a primary and ongoing need because of high turnover. Work in cold storage units is an essential component of the distribution center's work, but can be a physically demanding job even though all workers use the latest cold weather protective clothing, strict safety precautions are followed, and workers receive training in safety while performing their jobs. Workers in cold storage area are also rotated out to other jobs at the plant to give them a break from the conditions inside of the freezer lockers.

AMSI looked at these jobs as having three possible advantages. First, Veterans would have the opportunity to obtain a job that pays \$7.35 plus shift differentials, benefits, and an approximately 2.5% yearly increase. Next, Veterans would have opportunities to test out other jobs during their rotations out of cold storage (including warm storage packing and distribution, building maintenance, truck loading/unloading, etc.), which would provide diverse job experiences to help them build job skills and develop preferences. And perhaps equally as important in meeting the 'hard skills' needed to meet job expectations, Veterans have chances at GMT to re-develop the 'soft skills' critical to employment, such as working effectively with co-workers, being on time, and taking supervision. To date, AMSI has placed three HVRP Veterans into jobs at GMT.

Mr. Alcaide offers his perspective on why hiring Veterans from the HVRP is important for GMT: "Coming from a military upbringing, it is important for me to show support to our Veterans and provide job opportunities that will help them secure financial stability. It also provides a talent pool of candidates who have the skills, attitude, dedication, and commitment that only the military can teach. It is very fulfilling working with Veterans, and they are very happy to be given an opportunity."



Mr. Alcaide continued: "Working with AMSI in a program like the HVRP can help in recruiting and retaining a talent pool that has diverse skills and can help take a company to the next level. If given the opportunity, Veterans can provide a sense of loyalty that is hard to find. Also, the incentives provided to employers for hiring Veterans can help a company's payroll, which is usually one of the highest expenses generated in a corporation."

Finally, he offers advice from GMT's experience to Veteran job seekers on what it takes to get, keep, and advance in employment. "I would say adaptation is fundamental. The work dynamics in a corporate environment are very different than in the military. Veterans need to be mentally flexible to work in any environment and with a diverse workforce that may have different perspectives. I also would recommend being persistent. If they are not selected in one company, do not give up. Someone will give them the opportunity if they demonstrate the right attitude and commitment."

More about GMT can be found at its website:
<http://gmt-pr.com>

NVTAC

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