



Female veterans struggle in transition

By **MARK BRUNSWICK**, Star Tribune

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Female veterans face unique struggles. Not the least of which is having people actually recognize the growing number of women in the U.S. military. Women represent 15 percent of the armed forces and are the fastest-growing segment of the military population.

When women leave the military, their struggles have stretched out to include a Veterans Affairs medical system ill-prepared for their larger numbers.

A recent study found that the nearest VA health site did not offer mental health services to 40 percent of female vets, and 60 percent of nearby VA hospitals offered no women's health care at all.

Female veterans are four times likelier than male veterans to become homeless. Female veterans who served after 1990 have higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts.

The Business and Professional Women's Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that focuses on studying issues important to working women -- particularly women in nontraditional occupations -- has initiated a campaign focusing on the special needs of female vets.

The Joining Forces for Women Veterans campaign has almost \$50,000 in scholarships to help female vets get the training or certification they need to secure civilian jobs. The foundation is offering four \$10,000 scholarships through Military to Medicine, which is devoted to getting military members and their spouses into medicine-related jobs such as medical record-keeping, nursing and hospital administration.

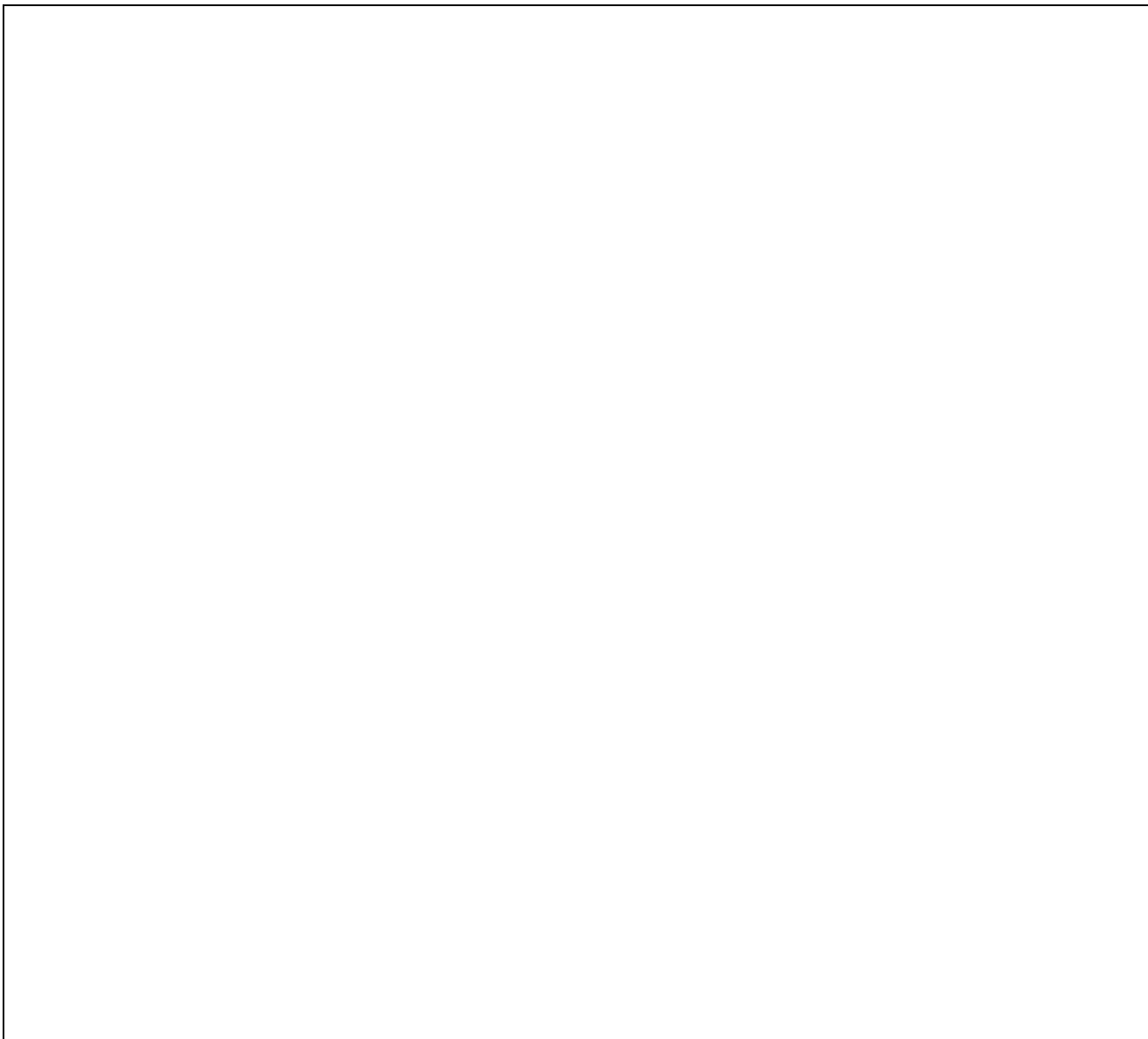
Six \$1,000 scholarships are available through Cengage Learning, which offers online certification and training for subjects from real estate brokerage to human resources law. With courses costing about \$125 apiece, the \$1,000 scholarship can help a veteran who may have years of experience, but lacks the certification for a specific civilian job.

Any female veteran can apply through foundation@bpwfoundation.org.

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