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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Ready, set, compete! How we're helping veterans and military family members innovate and start new businesses

Agency initiatives

Director Vidal with service members, military spouses, and veteran entrepreneurs at MacDill Air Force Base on March 29. (Photo by Michael Cleveland/USPTO)

Kathi Vidal

May 25, 2023 · 6 min read

America’s inventors and entrepreneurs power our nation’s economy, competitiveness, and security. Many of America’s outstanding innovators and leaders are veterans. The skills they gained from their service, including teamwork, integrity, and being organized, disciplined, adaptable, and focused, prepare them well for entrepreneurship. In fact, veterans have a proven track record of engaging in business ownership at higher rates than their peers in the civilian sector.

For service members preparing to transition into the civilian world, starting a business can be a viable second career. And for military spouses, self-employment can help provide professional and economic stability to weather the constant change that the military lifestyle brings. In alignment with First Lady Jill Biden and the White House's **Joining Forces Initiative** that centers on the three core pillars of employment and entrepreneurship, military child education, and health and well-being, we are working to encourage and support more transitioning service members, military family members, and veterans to bring their innovations to life, build successful businesses, and protect their creations with intellectual property.

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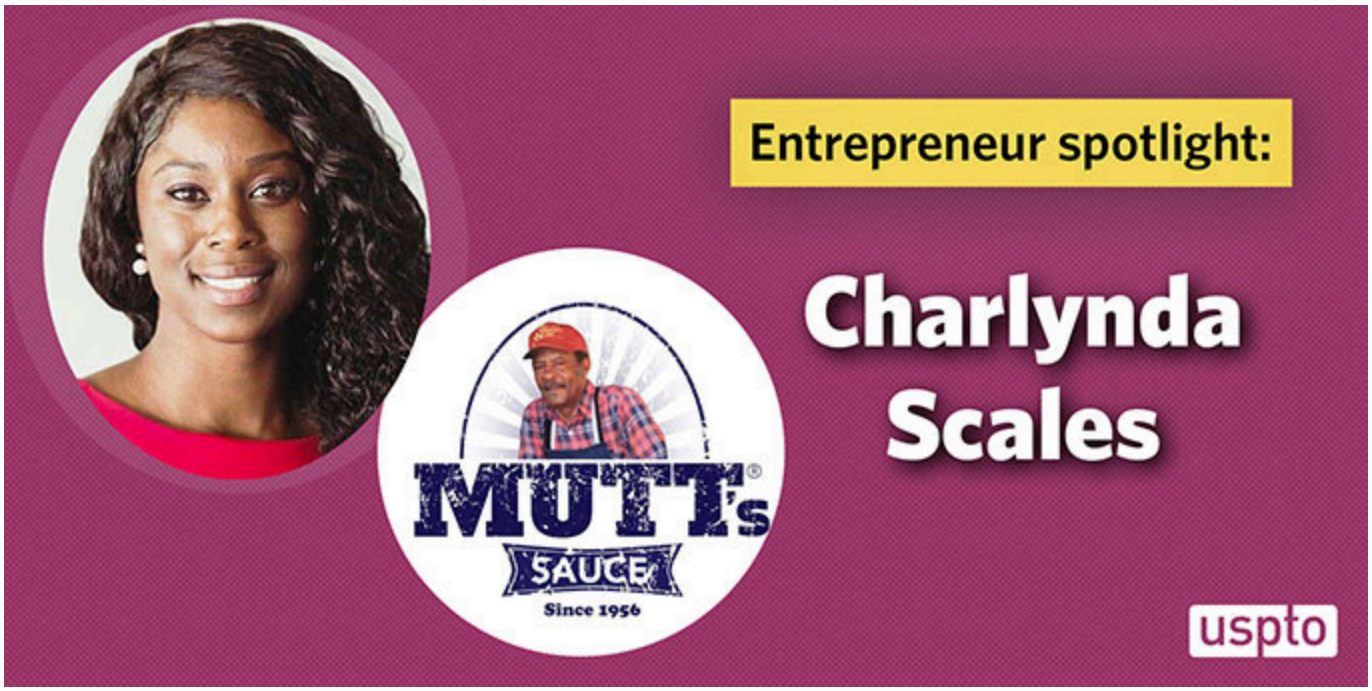

Charlynda Scales has a family legacy of service & innovation. An Air Force veteran, Scales is the founder and CEO of Mutt's Sauce LLC®, created by her late grandfather and fellow veteran, Charlie "Mutt" Ferrell.

Take Charlynda Scales. A U.S. Air Force veteran and entrepreneur, she is the founder and CEO of Mutt's Sauce LLC®, *"the sauce for every meal."* Her late grandfather and fellow Air Force veteran Charlie "Mutt" Ferrell originally created the specialty sauce and left her the recipe, which she then turned into a successful business. At our Veterans Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program last year, she spoke about how the skills she gained in the military helped her launch her business. She offered the following advice for other veteran entrepreneurs: "When you have served in the military and you decide you want to go into entrepreneurship, you are strengthening the country by being a business owner. Holding on to your core values, being a good person, and service before self – those things that we learned in the military – that's what sets you apart from everyone else."

Growing up in a career military family, my father served in the U.S. Navy as a senior chief and I spent my childhood on military bases in the United States, Panama, Germany, and the Azorean Islands (Portugal). I'm grateful for the opportunity to connect with service members and their families, and share information about the resources we provide at the USPTO – from trainings on patent and trademark basics to free legal services – that can help them become successful entrepreneurs. Our goal is simple: to shine a light on what starting a business looks like, what it requires, and who you can turn to for help on your journey.

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Recently, I met with military spouses and family members at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and MacDill Air Force Base, Florida to discuss essential skills every entrepreneur needs to know. And on June 9, we'll be holding an event at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. During these events, we go over the many aspects of entrepreneurship, from honing your business plan and protecting your brand and ideas, to market analysis and financing. Our military outreach events also feature successful military spouses and veteran business owners who share their personal experiences in entrepreneurship. Contact us if you're interested in hosting one of these workshops in the future.

On November 22, 2022, Director Vidal met with service members and their families at Fort Bragg, NC, to discuss USPTO resources that can help them start their own businesses.

Our USPTO regional offices also reach out across the country meeting innovators where they are with resources to jumpstart their businesses. From in-person and virtual events to

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networking opportunities, we are joining forces with local organizations and bringing entrepreneurship training directly to the military community.

I also had the pleasure of serving as a judge in the latest Dragon's Lair competition co-hosted by the U.S. Special Operations Command and 18th Airborne Corps at the University of South Florida's Research and Innovation Park in Tampa, Florida. Now in its eighth installment, service members from across the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) submitted their ideas for innovations to meet future challenges. The eight finalists were selected from among 80 ideas that represented every service within the DOD, and all ideas included developing intellectual property. The innovators really used their boots on the ground knowledge to see their projects through and create concrete solutions for real problems the Army currently faces. The winning innovation was a mold conditions awareness tool, a 3D-printed device that uses sensors to detect temperature and humidity levels within barracks rooms to identify early signs of mold, presented by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Chris Aliperti and Pvt. Salem Ezz from the 3rd Infantry Division. Congratulations to all the finalists in the competition on their phenomenal ideas.

In September 2022, USPTO staff from the Rocky Mountain Regional Office staff visited the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, where they spoke to cadets in the SPARK academy, learned about their mechanical engineering and aeronautics research, and viewed their patent wall.

We also actively recruit veterans, and they play an integral part of our operations at the USPTO. Many veterans have chosen to continue their invaluable service to our country by

joining the USPTO, and they contribute to our mission across our agency in the areas of science and engineering, information technology, contracts, procurement, finance, administration, project and program management, customer support, and more. In fiscal year 2022, 11% of our new hires were veterans. Learn more about **veteran hiring at the USPTO**.

Expanding our outreach to military families and veterans is more important than ever. By highlighting opportunities and creating more connections to resources to promote self-employment, we can help create a new era of economic stability and professional portability for military spouses and our veterans who have served.

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>
> Kathi Vidal, Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO

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In October 2022, Director Vidal held a discussion with the USPTO's Military Association's President Alford Kindred on work life balance at the USPTO. (Photo by Michael Cleveland/USPTO)

If you are affiliated with the military and interested in starting your own businesses or joining our workforce, we are eager to serve you. To learn more, visit our new page on entrepreneurship resources for the military community or contact us at militaryoutreach@uspto.gov. You can also connect with a regional USPTO office near you, check out our free resources for inventors and entrepreneurs, and view our upcoming programs. And stay tuned for our popular Veterans Innovation and Entrepreneurship program hosted each November.

Engage with the Director and join the conversation on our social media channels.

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