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# Defense business group changes name

By Rebecca Logan  
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The All American Defense Business Association has changed its name to the North Carolina Defense Business Association.

Joy Thrash, executive director of the Fayetteville-based association, said the new name better reflects that the association supports Department of Defense contractors and related companies and organizations throughout North Carolina.

"When we started out about a year ago, interest grew across the state very quickly," Thrash said.

She said the name change is also a nod to the support that the association is getting through such venues as the N.C. Department of Commerce and the governor's military liaison.

That support is not financial, Thrash said.

"When I met with the military liaison, the first thing I said to him was, 'We don't want money,' " she said. "We want to be independent of any government entity."

But Thrash said she appreciates the state support in terms of alerting interested companies to the group and its events.

"They're letting people know we're here and letting us know how we can help them," she said.

The N.C. Defense Business Association provides information for Department of Defense contractors looking to enhance contracting capabilities, connects contractors and businesses with resources, and offers networking opportunities.

Thrash said the association shares a partnership of sorts with the N.C. Department of Commerce, the North Carolina Military Foundation, the North Carolina Military Business Center and the state as a whole.

"We're all working toward the same goal. We just each have our own personal missions," she said.

The Department of Commerce is focused on assets, and the Military Foundation markets the state to the defense contracting world, Thrash said.

"The North Carolina Military Business Center connects the folks to the contracts," Thrash said. "And we have the folks. We're the networking piece of all this."

The name change also eliminates a phrase that can evoke thoughts of a specific military affiliation. The 82nd Airborne Division is known as the "All American division."

"When the name (of the association) was first developed, we were thinking 'All American' as in apple pie and sweet tea," Thrash said. But she said she later heard from people who thought the name implied too direct a link not just to the 82nd but to Fort Bragg in general.

"We want to include all the military branches, and we did not want the name to make anyone feel excluded," she said.

The name change was approved at the association's monthly board meeting Thursday. Thrash, who had been serving as interim director since May, was named executive director.

The board also elected Steven Moore to serve as chairman for a one-year term. Moore owns Moore Exposure, a promotional products company. Mark Phelan, an associate with Booz Allen Hamilton, was elected vice chairman. Dottie Womack, president and CEO of Saab Barracuda in Lillington, was elected secretary. Shanon Madrid, a senior vice president at First Citizens Bank Fort Bragg/Pope, was elected treasurer.

"In the last 12 months, we have a come a really long way," Moore said. "We were almost really just an idea, and we've grown from zero to 200 members."

He said there was a void in the business community for an organization to assist companies that do work with the Department of Defense.

"Doing business with the DOD is completely different than a business-to-business or retail-type model," Moore said.

He said he's long heard how North Carolina ranks high in terms of military payroll but low when it comes to Department of Defense contract dollars awarded.

"I believe we're about third in military presence and 26th in DOD dollars," Moore said. "I have a little bit of a competitive streak in me, and I'd like to see us move up that list."

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