

Oklahoma City 'best place' for military retirees to launch second careers

A study being released today shows Oklahoma City as the best place in the country for military retirees to launch second careers.

BY STEVE LACKMEYER slackmeyer@opubco.com  2

Published: November 9, 2011

When Thomas Tassinari retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2008, he could have returned to Boston to be near his parents, or he could have relocated to Seattle to be near his wife's family.

Instead, after spending several years working with AWACS as an airborne communications system operator at Tinker Air Force Base, he chose to spend his retirement years in Oklahoma City.

“We had a choice to go to either coast,” Tassinari said. “It took us a year to make a decision, but we chose to stay here. A big factor was the cost of living — it was a big influence. And with four kids (they've since had a fourth child), we already knew Oklahoma was a great place to raise a family.”

And then there's the traffic in Oklahoma City, which Tassinari notes is far better than Boston or Seattle. Finding a job in Oklahoma City, he added, was pretty easy.

Tassinari's experience is not uncommon for military retirees, according to a study released Tuesday by USAA, a financial services provider focused on serving the military and their families, and www.military.com, the country's largest military and veteran membership organization.

The study, “Best Places for Military Retirement: Second Careers,” ranks Oklahoma City first among 379 cities nationwide.

June Walbert, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves, was once stationed at Tinker as well before going to work as a financial planner with the USAA in San Antonio. She said Oklahoma City was well-positioned to top the list.

“We developed this list, which pinpoints places, so the military can launch a second career,” Walbert said. “It was top of the list because of stability, unemployment being at 5.2 percent and the types of industry in your area. We surveyed 379 metro areas with

an eye on where the military skill sets can best be used. We were looking at medical facilities, aviation, protection services and logistics. Often it's the places like these where the military will have skills.”

Tassinari was 39 years old, married with three kids ages 3 to 18 when he chose to retire.

“I joined the Air Force right out of high school,” he said. “Once I got to the 10-year-point, the best way to take care of my family was to make sure I could get that retirement check.”

Tassinari is typical of military retirees, Wilbert said, with the enlisted retiring at an average age of 39 and officers retiring at an average age of 46.

“Clearly they still have a lot more to offer,” Wilbert said. “Launching that career is a big life event, so we want to help them find the best place to retire.”

Unlike other lists giving Oklahoma City high praise for investments made in quality of life, most notably its MAPS programs, the USSA list looked at other factors. Wilbert, familiar with the downtown renaissance and school improvements, said such quality of life amenities are above and beyond the high marks given in their study.

Proximity to Tinker Air Force Base, she said, is a big key to Oklahoma City's draw for retirees. The base is the city's largest employer with 16,000 civilian and military employees.

“Tinker allows retirees to go on the installation, shop for groceries, save 25 to 30 percent, and also shop at the Base Exchange,” Walbert said. “It's a great way for them to stretch their dollars and save their money for down the road, 25 years after they've left the military.”



Show / Hide Comments

Ads by Yahoo!

Search for obituaries

Search Census, Birth, Marriage And Death Records
- Start A Free Trial.
www.ancestry.com

APEX M&A Business Brokers

Oklahoma Business Brokers Buy or Sell a
Business through APEX M&A
www.apexma.com