

From Marine To Beekeeper

(From left, Delaware State Apiarist Robert Mitchell; veteran Ronnie Hazlett; Planting Hope Project Manager Faith Kuehn; and University of Delaware assistant professor of apiculture Debbie Delaney, in the Department of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology.)

Marine veteran selected as first beekeeper program participant

By: Dan Shortridge

A U.S. Marine Corps veteran has been selected as the first participant in the Planting Hope with Honey Bees project.

Ronnie J. Hazlett II, of Wilmington, will receive training, mentoring, supplies and equipment to operate two beekeeping hives to be installed at the Planting Hope in Delaware Urban Farm. The Urban Farm is located on the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services' Herman Holloway Campus in New Castle.

"I'm excited about this opportunity to learn about beekeeping and eventually pass the knowledge on to fellow veterans," Hazlett said. "I've been interested in having my own hives ever since I was a kid. What really got me interested was receiving a huge hunk of honeycomb filled with honey from a local farmer. Maybe one day I'll hand my child or grandchild a piece of honeycomb and give them that same memory."

Planting Hope with Honey Bees is a joint venture between the Delaware Beekeepers Association, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension and the Delaware Department of Agriculture. Supplies were donated by Brushy Mountain Bee Farm and Mann Lake.

Ken Outten, president of the Delaware Beekeepers Association, said that the partners wanted to give a veteran the opportunity to learn new skills and get involved in beekeeping.

"Ronnie will be an excellent beekeeper. His enthusiasm and interest was evident, and we're looking forward to working with him," Outten said.

Born in Kentucky, Hazlett enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1998. He served as a marksmanship instructor at Stone Bay, N.C., teaching rifle and pistol skills. After leaving the Corps, he enrolled at the University of Kentucky in 2003. He moved to the Wilmington area in 2010.

The hives will be installed in the spring at the Planting Hope in Delaware Urban Farm.