SHE SERVED MAGAZINE

Celebrating Women Veterans



upstate WARRIOR solution

VIETNAM VETERAN BRENDA JANSONS

OPERATION SMURF:
THROUGH THE STORM — HOW COMMUNITY FUELED RESILENCE
BY VIRGINIA BARNES

SHE SERVED ISSUE 11:
UPSTATE WARRIOR SOLUTION EDITION

17 WOMEN VETERANS TELL THEIR STORY



DON'T WAIT ANOTHER DAY TO CALL AND ASK FOR HELP.

VA Resources for Women

Women Veterans Call Center:
855-VA-WOMEN

Veteran Crisis Hotline:
988 (press 1)

Caregiver Support Line:
855-260-3274

VA Benefits Hotline:
1-800-827-1000

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upstate WARRIOR solution

Learn more about United Warrior Solution:
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HOST A VETERAN PHOTO SHOOT

To host a **She Served** event visit:
www.sheservedinitiative.org.

General criteria: The space needs to be indoors, and approximately 20x20' in size, with at least an 8' ceiling height (preferably 10') with electrical outlets.

Photoshoot Details: Photoshoots are reserved for female Veterans only. Each Veteran will get a 30-minute professional photoshoot. They can bring props or mementos to be used during the session.

As the host you should be aware that each Veteran that wants to participate will need to fill out an intake form of basic information, provide a short biography of their military career and post military life, and provide a clear photo of themselves in uniform (their official service photo is best, but other photos of them in uniform are acceptable if it is clear and in focus so that their face is recognizable). We can comfortably accommodate approximately 10 women a day if the timeslots are scheduled in advance.



Expenses: We do not charge the Veteran or the host a photoshoot fee. However, as you can imagine we do have expenses. We ask the host to provide suitable lodging, air fare and/or reimbursement for gas, and my meals during the photoshoot. Visit https://sheservedinitiative.org/hosting/ for all the details then contact us to be a host!

A note from Julie Miller, She Served Initiative Vice Chairwoman:





As a Greenville resident, this photo shoot, hosted by Upstate Warrior Solution (UWS) was home for me. The She Served Initiative was honored to team up with this incredible organization for the session, and it was a privilege to highlight our featured veteran for this issue, **Brenda Jansons, a Vietnam nurse**. A special shout-out to Virginia Barnes, UWS Family Services Program Manager, for coordinating the arrangements that brought this shoot to life.

Each time I have the privilege of being part of a photo shoot, I am amazed by the caliber of the women we photograph. While Martina works her magic behind the camera, I spend time with each woman—reviewing her bio, sharing stories, and connecting on a personal level. In those few minutes, I learn so much about who they are, both in and out of uniform, and I always leave inspired by their accomplishments.

One of the most moving moments comes when these women read their own bios. Often, they are overcome with emotion—not from a negative reaction, but from realization. One woman shared, "I spend so much time taking care of others, I forget about myself and what I've accomplished."

That sentiment captures the very heart of The She Served Initiative. Our mission is to tell the stories of women Veterans—to remind them of their strength, their service, and their continued impact as civilians. They are doctors, first responders, business owners, mothers, grandmothers, volunteers—the list goes on.

We want the world to see and celebrate this truth: This is what a woman Veteran looks like.

Julie Miller



HELP US LOCATE AND PAY HOMMAGE TO MORE WOMEN VETERANS

We invite you to join us in honoring and paying tribute to the invaluable service of women Veterans from World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam. Your support is crucial in recognizing their dedication and contributions to our nation's history. Together, let's express our gratitude for their sacrifices and celebrate their remarkable service.

If you, or someone you know, would like to be featured email martina@sheservedinitiative.org

Visit Our Website!

Explore the *She Served* image galleries, purchase current and past issues of the magazine and shop exclusive merchandise — including tank tops, travel mugs and water bottles.

Discover more at:
https://sheservedinitiative.org

SCAN THE CODE

Princella

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Princella Lee Bridges' journey to the United States Air Force began with a nudge from someone who saw her potential long before she saw it in herself. Encouraged by Dr. Bill Jones, an orthopedic surgeon she deeply admired, she recognized that military service could open the doors to education, travel, and a better future. With limited financial resources and inspired by friends who had already served, she stepped forward, and went on to build an extraordinary 12-year career.

Princella served in the Air Force from 1982 to 1994. She first enlisted as a surgical technician before becoming a nurse and eventually a Medical Crew Director. In that role, she turned C-141 aircraft into flying hospitals, preparing them for aeromedical evacuation missions, monitoring patients in the air, and ensuring safe and seamless transfers to receiving medical teams. She is particularly proud of leading multiple humanitarian missions and of a critical decision to remove a ventilated patient from a flight when her team could not provide the level of in-air care his condition required, a choice that may have saved his life.

Princella supported many critical missions including Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Panama, and Beirut. While many of her awards and commendations were lost in a house fire, she remembers receiving a special recognition from Saudi Arabia for her contribution to the Gulf War effort. The experiences strengthened her leadership, sharpened her decision-making, and taught her how to advocate with authority and integrity, skills that continue to guide her today.

A survivor of a house fire that destroyed nearly all she owned, Princella rebuilt her life with resilience shaped by the strong women in her family. Raised by supportive parents, two siblings, a courageous paratrooper uncle, and two remarkable grandmothers, she learned early what it meant to persevere. Though she has no biological children, she helped raise her nieces and nephews, who lovingly see her as a mother figure. Today, Princella is retired from formal employment, but nowhere near retired from service. Widely known in her community as "the mayor of Pleasant Valley," she is a fierce advocate for food equity, senior support, social justice and community care initiatives. She serves as president of the Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Association and remains active through multiple organizations across Greenville. She volunteers with Vet Forward, a program supported by Upstate Circle of Friends, and is also a member of Vets Helping Vets Greenville.

Her story of survival and leadership has been featured by the National Fire Protection Association profile: **https://www.nfpa.org/videos/faces-of-fire-princella-lee-bridges**

Her message for women transitioning out of the military is filled with grace and honesty: "Transition slowly and find your purpose. Don't let others define your path. Stay true to your heart, create your own space, and be patient with the process." Without the structure of military life, the shift can feel overwhelming, she says; but purpose will come with time.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Just work till the day is done."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"The future belongs
to those who believe
in the beauty of
their dreams."
~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Rosa

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Rosa Snaric served in the United States Army from 1999 to 2025, rising from enlisted soldier to major. Motivated by a desire to serve her community and contribute to something greater than herself, she built a 26-year career defined by leadership, compassion and resilience. Commissioned through Clemson University's ROTC program in 2003, she earned a Bachelor of Science in sociology with a minor in health science. Two years later, Rosa deployed to Iraq as a lieutenant at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, north of Baghdad. There she learned that leadership was not only about command but also about empathy and care for others.

For her service, she received the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal and Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" device.

Returning home, Rosa earned a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and began providing trauma and PTSD counseling to veterans and military families. The work deepened her belief that connection and purpose are essential to healing. These values guided both her military and civilian careers.

Over two decades, Rosa served in diverse leadership roles: public affairs journalist, human resources officer, commander of the 414th Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Company and later commander of the 457th CBRN Battalion Headquarters Detachment. She also worked as battalion S-4, property book officer and assistant professor of military science at Wofford College.

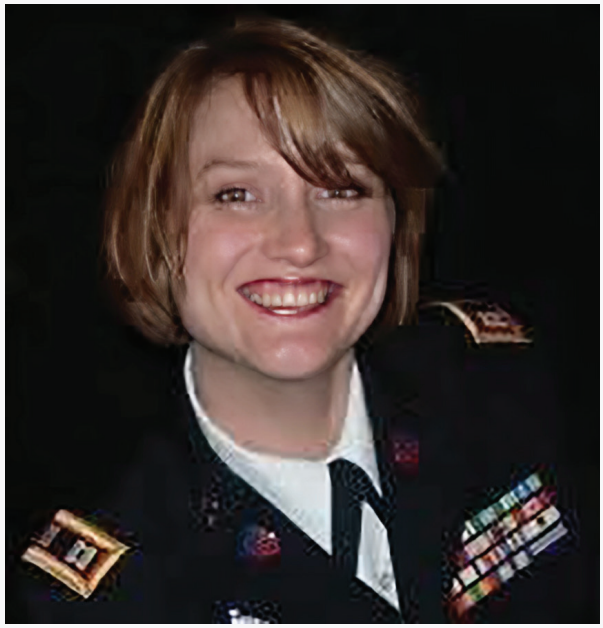
Community service remains central to Rosa's life. She co-leads a Girl Scout troop, participates in the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, and supports foster families across South Carolina. Alongside her husband, she raises her family — three sons and one daughter — instilling values of service and compassion.

Now a licensed therapist and founder of New Beginnings Palmetto (**www.newbeginningspalmetto.com**), Rosa continues to empower others through counseling and mentorship. Her philosophy is that everyone deserves guidance, direction and the chance to rebuild their life.

To the public, Rosa emphasizes that women in service have always been strong, capable leaders — balancing duty, family and purpose while breaking barriers.

For her fellow women Veterans, she advises staying connected. The mission may change, but the call to serve remains. The courage, adaptability and leadership developed in uniform continue to change lives long after military service.





Magali

BY JULIE MILLER

The impact of the Vietnam war inspired **Magali Rivera** to join the military. She wanted to make a difference in the world and she saw military service as a path to do just that.

From 1975 to 1977, Magali, a United States Air Force Veteran, worked in air traffic warning systems, helping pilots defend American airspace during the tense post-war years. Her role involved critical communication with pilots, ensuring rapid response and secure skies during an era marked by transition and global uncertainty.

"The importance of national security and the value of morale to complete your mission, those are lessons I carry with me to this day," she said.

Her service, though not in direct combat, was deeply rooted in the climate of the Vietnam War, where every position mattered in securing peace and preparing for future threats. She was part of a generation that bridged war and peacetime, setting a foundation for today's modern military operations.

After completing her military service, Magali embraced a life of service in new forms. She became an ordained pastor, earned a culinary degree, and worked with children who have special needs. Today, she is semi-retired but remains active as a patient care and respite provider for families affected by autism.

Married for 49 years, she is a mother of five and grandmother to nine. Her life is a rich blend of service, creativity, and compassion—reflected in her love for reading, painting, decorating, culinary arts, and event planning. She also supports her community through the nonprofit, Thyme and Play, which creates inclusive experiences for atypical families led by service-connected disabled veterans.

When asked what she wants others to know about women Veterans, she doesn't hesitate: "They are strong. Persistent, determined, loving, sometimes hurting, compassionate, overachieving, intelligent, insightful, spontaneous, cautious, vigilant, loyal and true."

To women transitioning from military to civilian life, she offers this advice: "Never give up. There is always time to have a life worth living."







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"I am Woman
Phenomenally,
Phenomenal Woman,
that's me."
~ Maya Angelou

Nica

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Inspired by a long line of family members who served their country, **Nica Carson** has made it her mission to continue that legacy, first in uniform, and now as an advocate for others who wear it.

Growing up, she admired her father, an United States Air Force Veteran, and her brother, who served with the Army's 101st Air Assault. But it wasn't until Anne visited her "cool older cousin" who was home during a Thanksgiving leave from Navy training that she began to picture herself in uniform. "That's when I realized women could serve too, and serve well," she said.

She joined the Army Medical Service Corps after earning her commission through ROTC at Ouachita Baptist University, serving from August 1990 to December 1998 with the Army National Guard. As a medical administrator and field medical officer, she led an ambulance platoon responsible for ensuring her medics were trained, equipped, and ready to deliver lifesaving care under pressure.

"I was inspired by my medics," she said. "They taught me how to perform their tasks, which led me to earn the Expert Field Medical Badge—a grueling achievement that tested me physically and mentally." That experience would later inspire her transition from accounting to becoming a 911 paramedic and, ultimately, a physician assistant.

Her military decorations include the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Vermont Meritorious Service Ribbon. Yet she says the most valuable lessons weren't medals but perspective. "The military brings together people of all backgrounds to accomplish one mission," she said. "It taught me the value of diversity and teamwork."

Today, she serves as a veteran and first responder advocate with Upstate Warrior Solution, helping others find resources, career support, and connection. She's also active in heritage organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution, working to honor veterans through initiatives such as Wreaths Across America.

Outside of her work, she finds joy in learning, creating, and connecting with the world around her. "I love God, my family, and my country," she said. "Music and nature are food for the soul, both can be enjoyed from the seat of my Jeep! I love making things, art, sewing, woodworking, needlework, and doing genealogical sleuthing. I have too many hobbies and not enough time."

Married for nearly 33 years to her husband Doug, an Army Airborne Veteran, she is the proud mother of three grown children.

"Women Veterans," she said, "are as different as snowflakes, but together we form a strong, unbreakable sisterhood."







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Onward and upward!"
~ C.S. Lewis



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"You can't pour from an empty cup. Take care of yourself first."
~ Unknown

LaKeisha

BY JULIE MILLER

For many, inspiration to serve comes later in life, but for **LaKeisha Cannon**, the seed was planted in high school. Through the Upward Bound program, which provides academic and college prep support, she met alumni who had joined the military. Hearing how it gave them access to education, travel, and job training sparked something in her. "I reached out to a recruiter, explored my options, and ultimately chose the United States Air Force," she said. "I was the first in my immediate family to join the military."

She began her military career in 1999 as a Supply Systems Analyst, where she managed inventory, maintained databases, and coordinated supply logistics. In the final year and a half of her service, she cross-trained as a Paralegal Specialist, providing legal support to military personnel—including drafting legal documents, managing claims, and conducting notary services.

During her eight years of service, LaKeisha was stationed at Scott Air Force Base, Yokota Air Base, and Edwards Air Force Base, and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom to locations including Oman and the United Arab Emirates. One of her proudest moments was serving on the base Honor Guard at Yokota Air Base, where she helped honor fallen service members. "Traveling to Manila to participate in a memorial with the Philippine Army is something I'll never forget," she said.

After separating in 2007, she transitioned into the IT field and eventually found her calling in project management. Today, she serves as a project manager in construction, building on more than a decade of experience in both IT and infrastructure projects.

Deeply committed to community service, she's been on the board of directors for the Project Management Institute Palmetto Chapter in South Carolina for the past five years. She also volunteers with organizations such as United Way, Meals on Wheels, and Loaves and Fishes.

Married for 15 years and a proud mother of 12-year-old twins, she finds joy cheering on her kids in football, track, cheer, and dance—and reconnecting with her love for books through audiobooks.

To women Veterans, she says: "We served with strength, dedication, and purpose. Our stories matter—and they deserve to be heard."





Brenda

BY JULIE MILLER

Brenda Jansons path to service began long before she wore the uniform. Inspired by four uncles who fought in World War II and her experiences as a junior hostess at the USO during high school, she knew early on that the military called to her sense of purpose and patriotism.

After earning her nursing degree, Brenda joined the Air National Guard out of Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1965. Two years later, she went on active duty. When she discovered she could become a flight nurse, she attended the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio, Texas, proudly earning her wings.

Brenda served aboard C-130 medevac transport aircraft, providing critical in-flight nursing care for Guard units. Her service took her across Europe, Greece, Turkey and Germany and it was during these missions that she first encountered patients wounded in Vietnam.

In 1968, she volunteered for service in Vietnam and was assigned to the 36th Evacuation Hospital at China Beach, a 400-bed facility caring for both military personnel and Vietnamese civilians. The Tet Offensive erupted soon after her arrival, testing her courage and compassion. “We did the best we could, but we just couldn’t save everyone,” she said. “All these years later, the memories are still vivid.”

After returning home, Brenda continued her nursing career and raised two daughters, Leann and Angel. Today, she takes pride in her growing family, including two granddaughters, Toya and Gabie.

Though her time in uniform ended, her dedication to veterans never did. She has devoted her time volunteering and worked closely with the Greenville Vet Center for many years.

Brenda is very proud of her role in the establishment of the Vietnam Women’s Memorial Project/Foundation. She was selected as the South Carolina representative and worked with other supporters across the country. The memorial was dedicated in 1993. On a visit to the memorial she was surprised by an unexpected reunion when a former patient recognized her by her green eyes and thanked her for the care she gave him.

Brenda’s love of history is deeply rooted in her family. She is a proud and active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Brenda would like the public to understand honoring women Veterans means ensuring their stories are seen and heard. “Women Veterans feel as strongly about our country as our male counterparts, and when it comes to serving with strong values we are the ones lighting the candle to see the way.”

To fellow Veterans Brenda says “believe you are strong enough to follow your dreams. Stick with people who share your values and do not walk away until you are heard. Find that group or organization that supports your beliefs. Who you are will come through with your actions."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Believe you are strong enough to follow your dreams."



OPERATION SMURF:

Through the Storm — How Community Fueled Resilence

WRITTEN BY VIRGINIA BARNES



Eighty-three-year-old Brenda Jansons had already known great loss in her life — war, migration, poverty, rebuilding. But the night a lantern slipped from her hands in the living room, ignited and set her home ablaze, the loss felt different. Ms. Brenda sat across the street in a downpour watching the contents of her home burn. At this time in her life the pain and loss felt greater, she was older, slower, and more vulnerable. Trauma hits differently when you no longer have a lifetime ahead to rebuild and she felt something she had rarely allowed herself to feel: fear that she was facing this alone. She wasn't.

Days, Months, and a Year

After the fire neighbors came with food, amenities, clothes, and more. People Ms. Brenda knew only by the wave of their hands arrived with casseroles and warm coffee. Family, friends, and strangers alike supported Ms. Brenda. One friend from out-of-state connected with a local friend, Bill Price, and the tragedy became a shared burden.

Bill connected with Virginia Barnes, Family Services Program Manager with Upstate Warrior Solution. Within a few days Virginia met with Bill, and Ms. Brenda's family at the totaled home for inspection. It was evident that the project ahead required the support of the community.

Shortly after the inspection, they met again to discuss an action plan. A project like this deserved a name. A drawing of a Smurf on the wall, done by Ms. Brenda's daughter, had survived the fire and when Virginia saw it she knew the project had a name. Operation Smurf was born.

People didn't just show up once — they showed up for two consecutive weekends to gut the interior of the home in preparation for demolition. Energized selfless community members worked united to clean-up the acreage surrounding the home. They worked in soot and ash until her yard was cleared and the broken structure was ready for demolition.

Some searched through debris for anything salvageable, treating ruined objects with reverence. One woman held up a fragile ceramic bowl, cracked but intact, and said, "We saved this for you." Ms. Brenda cried at the sentiment.

A Year of Waiting, a Year of Healing

Insurance delays, county permits, demolition scheduling—everything took longer than it should have. The wrecked home remained for almost a year, a constant reminder of the trauma and instability Ms. Brenda felt.

But Upstate Warrior Solution, their Community Partners, family, friends, and neighbors never let her drift into isolation.

They drove her to appointments, brought her meals, invited her to gatherings so she wouldn't spend her evenings alone. Local volunteers took care of her shrubs that she wanted to transplant once she secured a new home. A group of veterans and loved ones visited regularly, sitting with her at local restaurants and various other hot spots that made Ms. Brenda smile. Conversations about survival—its costs, and its stubborn grace.

Trauma didn't vanish. Ms. Brenda sometimes woke in the night, breath tight, convinced she smelled smoke. But she wasn't enduring the nightmares alone. People listened. Listened again, and again. Healing, she learned, wasn't a straight path. It was a circle of hands. Ms. Brenda participated in Upstate Warrior Solution's Family Services Program, "Cornerstone Heroes': BECOMING, facilitated by licensed counselor, Sara McAvoy. A program designed for a client that has experienced a life chapter change with the goal of facing the present, self-discovery, the realization of healing with a new destination, to conclude with a healthy and happy new chapter.

When the Storm Came Again

The second storm—the one that finally knocked the unstable remains of the house down—should have been a devastating blow. But by then Ms. Brenda had grown stronger. She had processed, shared, breathed, grieved.

When she sat watching the demolition, she felt a strange peace. Not because the loss was gone, but because she had learned she could survive it. The irony Ms. Brenda sat in the very location across the street, in a downpour during the last day of demolition. Ms. Brenda literally came full circle.

Behind her, members of the community stood with umbrellas. No one had asked them to come. They simply did. Together.

An Empty Lot, a New Beginning

When the land was cleaned and leveled, the empty parcel looked less like an ending and more like space for hope.

Community groups pooled resources. Introductions to Realtors began. Family looked at potential new homes, navigated paperwork, and celebrated when Ms. Brenda purchased a new house. All the while the community walked alongside her.

Months later, Ms. Brenda unlocked the door to her new home. It was smaller, simpler, and filled with light. The walls were unmarked by smoke, but the people who helped build this chapter had left something deeper: a sense of belonging.

Resilience, Redefined

Ms. Brenda understood resilience differently now. It wasn't the stoic, silent endurance she had always practiced. It wasn't suffering without tears.

Resilience was allowing others to carry the weight with her. It was asking for help. Accepting comfort. Sharing memories of what was lost. Letting people witness her grief so they could also witness her healing.









It was a community in motion — people turning tragedy into tenderness.

The night she slept in her new home, Ms. Brenda placed sentimental items saved on her bedside table. Throughout her home she displayed her treasures that survived the heated flames.

Ms. Brenda touched the items with fond memories and stated, “We made it through, again.”

Outside, the wind rustled softly through the trees — not a storm this time, but a reminder:

She had survived fire, war, loss, and fear.

But she had never survived alone.

And that, she realized, was resilience.





Virginia Barnes

Operation Smurf could not have happened without our community partners.

UWS extends a heartfelt Thank you to everyone that stepped up for Ms. Brenda and Operation Smurf. From individual volunteers to local businesses the response was inspiring. thank you all including: Moose Lodge #749, Dave’s Deli, United Front Safety Solutions, VaVa Greenville and Smash My Trash.

Anna

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

When the world changed on Sept. 11, 2001, **Anna Harris** was just a middle school student, but that day defined her future. "I knew that day that I needed to serve and go do something," she said. For her 17th birthday, her parents gave her a gift few others receive: permission to enlist in the North Carolina National Guard. Anna then received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point.
After graduating from West Point, Harris went on to serve in both the U.S. Army and the North Carolina National Guard from 2010 to 2015, specializing in human resources. She deployed to Iraq in 2011 for 11 months, serving as a Brigade Strength Manager and Casualty Officer. "I took a lot of pride in that role,taking care of our troops and their families," she said.

Her dedication and compassion earned her the Meritorious Service Medal, awarded for exceptional performance under demanding conditions. "I was responsible for tracking personnel movements, managing replacements, and overseeing casualty operations," Harris said. "That experience reinforced what service is truly about, taking care of people."

After returning home, Harris continued to lead in key roles, including Battalion S1 for the 3rd Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, and as Executive Officer at the Louisville Military Entrance Processing Station. There, she helped enlist new recruits and guide the next generation of service members.

Now, as the Director of Human Chemistry and Talent at North American Rescue, Harris continues her mission, building strong teams and developing leaders who support those who save lives. "I'm fortunate to work alongside many veterans and first responders," she said. "We all share that same drive to make a difference."

Harris also founded Coffee with Veterans and First Responders, a community initiative that helps local heroes connect, learn, and find new career opportunities. "It's become a staple in our community," she said proudly,"and we have been going strong for over 6 years."

Married to her husband Jacob for six years, Harris is the mother of two daughters, Maggie, 5, and Eva, 3. She credits her family and faith for grounding her through every challenge.

Anna's message to the public: Women Veterans bring unique skills and perspectives that strengthen both the military and our communities. We lead with balance, adaptability, and purpose, qualities that make a lasting impact long after our service ends.

"Women Veterans bring unique strengths—balance, adaptability, and purpose—that make an impact long after service ends," she said.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Choose your hard! Marriage is hard. Divorce is hard. Obesity is hard. Being fit is hard. Being in debt is hard. Being financially disciplined is hard. Choose your hard."



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"The question isn't who is going to let me, it's who is going to stop me." ~ Ayn Rand



Nicole

BY SHERYL BINETTI

From an early age, **Nicole Anderson** felt drawn to serve. Grateful for the freedoms her country afforded, she wanted to give back in a meaningful way, to contribute to something larger than herself. That sense of purpose led her to enlist in the United States Marine Corps from 2015 to 2019, fulfilling a lifelong calling rooted in respect, patriotism, and love of country.

As an Aviation Ordnance Technician, Nicole took on one of the most technical and high-responsibility roles in the Marine Corps. Her duties included storing, inspecting, and maintaining ammunition and explosives, as well as arming and disarming aircraft and testing weapons systems. Every task demanded precision, focus, and an unwavering commitment to safety. Working in ordnance required not only mechanical skill but also trust, the kind earned through teamwork and accountability.

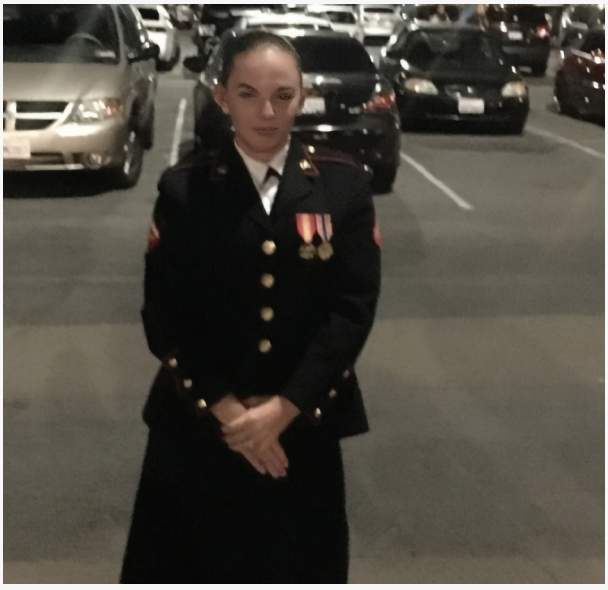
During her four years of active duty, Nicole's unit deployed to Okinawa, Japan, supporting international operations across Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. She earned the rank of corporal, completed the Corporals Course, and gained the respect of those she served alongside. Her time in the Marine Corps built a foundation that continues to guide her life. The experience taught integrity, discipline, and respect, qualities that extend far beyond service and shape every relationship and responsibility. The Corps instilled in her a deep appreciation for fellow Marines and for the families and communities that support them.

Born in Greenville, South Carolina, Nicole returned home after her enlistment and now works with Upstate Warrior Solution as the SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program Coordinator. Her role allows her to continue serving Veterans by managing data, coordinating events, and building relationships that strengthen outreach and support systems. Through this work, she ensures no veteran feels isolated or unseen.

Outside of work, Nicole stays active in community service, volunteering with Team Red, White & Blue and Habitat for Humanity. Her life is full of movement and purpose, hiking, reading, and spending time with her niece, nephew, and two dogs bring balance and joy.
To the public, her message is clear: women Veterans are strong, resilient, and compassionate. They lead not only through service but by example in their communities every day.

Her advice to women transitioning to civilian life is to stay connected, find community, seek peer support, and build relationships with others who understand the unique challenges of post-military life. Connection and camaraderie remain the heart of resilience.





Elizabeth

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Elizabeth Taggart served in the United States Navy from May 1982 to October 2010 as a naval officer. Motivated by her father's Army career, she earned a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship, launching her 28-year service. While she served as a computer center manager, she was fortunate to have worked alongside Admiral Grace Hopper on the Navy's first Intranet. She filled many other roles during her career including operational test director for new weapons systems; Trident Submarine service pier operations officer, public affairs officer at Submarine Base Bangor, overseeing the Environmental Impact Statement for the Trident C4-to-D5 transition. Elizabeth was named program manager for NATO's Science and Technology Exchange Program, and served as the executive officer for the Expeditionary Logistics Force in Bahrain, supporting Central Command. She also took part in the South Korean Ulchi Focus Lens exercises.

Elizabeth received two Navy Commendation Medals, two Navy Achievement Medals, the Korea Service Medal, the Meritorious and Presidential Unit Commendation, as well as the Presidential Environmental Award.

After retiring, Elizabeth worked 11 years as a senior program manager with General Dynamics, where she oversaw advanced Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency initiatives, including classified underwater weapons programs. She also partnered with federal law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, DEA, and ATF, on national surveillance projects.

Elizabeth is now married to a retired Navy submarine captain. Their son is a Navy Reserve lieutenant commander, Navy Diver, and in training to become a senior FBI field agent. Their daughter practices dentistry.

Dedicated to serving others, Elizabeth is president of the Korean War Veterans Association and a member of Vets Helping Vets, Last Patrol, and the Navy League. She also supports several Korean American organizations in Greenville, South Carolina.

In retirement, Elizabeth enjoys pickleball, swimming, reading, gardening, traveling, and Korean fan dancing. Elizabeth reminds the public that women veterans are strong and resilient, empowered by the hardships of military service. To those adjusting to civilian life, she offers this advice: give yourself time, and trust that your skills remain valuable, even when applied differently.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"In the midst of winter,
I have found within me
an invincible summer."
~ Albert Camus





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Your life doesn't end at 30, or 40, or 50, or 60... so stop acting like it does. You can reinvent yourself whenever you want." ~ Mel Robbins

Baena

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Seeking independence, education, and a sense of direction, **Baena LaBrecque** joined the United States Army in August 1980, serving until April 1983 as a Communications Specialist. Being shy and introverted, Baena saw the Army as an opportunity to travel, build confidence, and have a future without burdening her family. Though not every expectation was as she had hoped, the experience remains one without regrets. Working with communication demanded precision, organization, and teamwork. These skills would later shape both her career and character. Every assignment taught something new about problem-solving, leadership, and the importance of clear, reliable communication in every mission.

Military service also offered Baena a new perspective on resilience. She learned to adapt quickly, balancing the challenges of military life with an understanding that perseverance and integrity build credibility faster than rank ever could. The Army became the foundation for a lifetime of purpose and direction. Her most significant takeaway was the great appreciation and understanding of freedom, and for things people take for granted, like water, housing,
small but important comforts in life.

Following active duty, Baena transitioned into civilian life carrying those same values forward. The confidence built through uniformed service inspired a career path in public safety and a commitment to the community. Now retired, she remains connected to fellow veterans and continues to advocate for the recognition and support of servicewomen within her community.

Baena is a single mom to two grown children, both Air Force veterans, and grandmother to two! Her life reflects the ripple effect of service. The way discipline, empathy, and courage extend beyond the military to shape families, workplaces, and neighborhoods. The lessons learned in uniform continue to influence how she approaches challenges, mentors others, and finds meaning in everyday contributions.

Communities often overlook the quiet strength of women who served. Baena represents that legacy. She is steadfast, capable, and quietly proud. Her story stands as a reminder to others that military service is more than duty; it's a transformation. The public should know that we women Veterans may not always wear veteran hats, T-shirts, or tattoos, but we served our country faithfully. Veterans, Memorial Day, and Armed Forces Day are for us too.

For her fellow sister Veterans, Baena recommends that you stay in touch with the veteran community. This will help you through the times when it may seem the civilian community struggles to fully "get" you or that part of your life. It's also a way to discover what help is out there for you.





Lauren BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Adventure was the spark that led **Lauren Luna** to join the United States Army from 2004-2007. Growing up, she dreamed of making something of herself and becoming the first in her family to serve. The military offered purpose, discipline, and a chance to step beyond the familiar and into a world of challenge and opportunity.

Serving as a motor transport operator (88M), Lauren was responsible for driving and maintaining tactical wheeled vehicles that carried personnel, cargo, and essential supplies. Often required to move troops and equipment across rough terrain and unpredictable environments. Stationed at Fort Drum, New York, Lauren served with the 10th Brigade Support Battalion. During her deployment to Baghdad, she was assigned to the Tactical Operations Center at Camp Liberty. As a radio telephone operator, she coordinated convoys entering and leaving the base, maintained constant communication with command, and ensured the safety of soldiers on the road.

Lauren's service was recognized through multiple awards, including the National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, and the Army Good Conduct Medal. Yet, her proudest takeaway was not the medals but the growth that came from experience. She gained adventure but also maturity, self-confidence, and lifelong friendships forged through shared hardship and purpose.

Lauren is married to an infantry Veteran, and together they've built a life grounded in service and family. The couple celebrated 20 years of marriage, with three children who reflect the strength and unity their parents built through shared sacrifice.

Today, Lauren continues to serve others as a veteran and first responder advocate with Upstate Warrior Solution. Whether helping someone access benefits, find housing, or simply sitting down for coffee and conversation, she believes every story deserves to be heard.
Life at home includes a small family farm filled with chickens, a growing garden, and soon, goats. The Luna family's time together on their land has become a peaceful counterbalance to years of movement and service.

Lauren's message to the public is that women Veterans are strong, smart, and capable. Their service is not secondary; it is essential.

For women adjusting to civilian life, Lauren recommends that they find their tribe and be patient. It can be difficult to connect with others who haven't walked the same path, but by reaching out to military and veteran organizations, every woman can rediscover belonging, understanding, and purpose.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Though it is little that
one woman can do,
still I crave the
privilege of doing it."
~ Clara Barton

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." ~ Joshua 1:9 (NIV)



Eva

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Eva Vega served in the United States Navy from 2004-2008 as an Aviation Warfare Systems Operator (AW). As an AW, Eva learned to track and identify submarines from the skies above the ocean. She later expanded her skills, serving as an aircrewman in convoy relay operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. In this role, she and her team relayed vital communications for medical assistance, forward operating bases, evacuations, and emergencies. Her primary duty, however, was in anti-nuclear deterrence. This assignment placed her as part of the first line of defense against nuclear attacks.

Eva remains proud of her contributions. Her experiences were often grueling, but she drew strength from knowing she was part of something greater than herself. "Even in the moments that sucked," she reflects, "God had a plan and design for my life." She is grateful for the way the service trained her for what would come next.

Coming from a long line of family service members, Eva felt called to continue that legacy. Her grandfather served in the U.S. Army, her father in the Korean War, her great uncle in WWII, and other relatives have served and still serve in both U.S. and Canadian forces. As she approached adulthood, financial and personal motivations only solidified her commitment to serve.

It was during boot camp that Eva met her future husband. She calls her agreeing to marry him, five years after first meeting, as the best decision of her life. Together, they are raising two children, a 15-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter, both on the autism spectrum.

Today, Eva's commitment to advocacy continues. In 2018, she launched a nonprofit focused on autism and social experiences. While sidelined during the COVID pandemic, her dedication to autism advocacy, veteran advocacy, and her children remains unwavering.

Eva encourages the public to recognize that women Veterans serve in every capacity, not just behind desks or away from combat zones.

To those women transitioning into civilian life, Eva offers this heartfelt advice: "Find your why. Leaving the military can feel isolating, but once you discover your purpose again, you can withstand the day. Purpose gives you strength to live."





Upstate Warrior Solution: Connecting, Leading, and Inspiring Female Veterans in the Upstate

BY HEATHER VALLE BROWN MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER, UPSTATE WARRIOR SOLUTION



Upstate Warrior Solution (UWS) is a community-based nonprofit serving military Veterans, first responders, and their families across the Upstate of South Carolina. Our mission is to connect, lead, and inspire by walking alongside those who have served and helping them build purposeful, connected lives after service. We proudly serve all warriors, and in this special spotlight we are sharing the powerful stories of female Veterans whose contributions and experiences are an important part of our community's history and future. Women now make up one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population *(United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2025)*. Their unique challenges and achievements are often underrepresented. UWS is committed to making sure these stories are told.

Through the Advocacy Team, we help female Veterans navigate benefits, secure housing, and access healthcare, including services designed specifically for women.

UPSTATE WARRIOR SOLUTION

Our **Career Services Program** connects them to meaningful careers through job placement, résumé development, and mentorship.

Our **Peer Support Programs** foster trust and connection with others who understand the unique demands of military life. The Family Services Program builds a strong support system for veterans and first responder families through events and gatherings that help spouses and families connect, share experiences, and find community with others who understand their lifestyle.

Our **Community Engagement Team** builds partnerships and outreach opportunities that connect veterans to local organizations, resources, and events, strengthening the ties between warriors and the communities they continue to serve. The Spiritual Support Programs provide faith-based connection and guidance for those seeking encouragement, healing, or reflection as part of their journey toward personal well-being.

We also offer the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program for those launching businesses, and Outdoor Recreation opportunities that create space for wellness, camaraderie, and confidence building. Whether a woman is seeking stability, community, or her next big opportunity, UWS meets her where she is and walks with her toward her goals. Founded in 2013, UWS began when community leaders recognized a gap in care for Veterans returning to civilian life. Over the last decade, we have served thousands of warriors, adapting and expanding our services to meet evolving needs. Our work with female Veterans has grown steadily, reflecting their increasing presence and leadership in the Upstate.

With offices in Anderson, Pickens, Oconee, and Spartanburg Counties, UWS operates throughout the region, bringing resources directly to the communities where veterans live. Our flagship location, the Rupert Huse Veteran Center in Greenville, serves as a hub for collaboration, hosting workshops, wellness activities, partner programs, and walk-in support. Female Veterans can find not only practical help here but also a space where their service is acknowledged and their voices are heard.

Women have served in every branch of the United States Armed Forces (United States Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.), in roles ranging from combat operations to critical support positions. Their stories are as diverse as they are inspiring. Yet for too long, those stories have been overshadowed. UWS is committed to shining a light on the courage, leadership, and resilience of female Veterans in the Upstate, recognizing their sacrifices, celebrating their successes, and ensuring they feel valued both in and out of uniform.

The transition from military service to civilian life can be overwhelming, especially for women who may face both visible and invisible challenges, from navigating male dominated Veteran spaces to balancing family responsibilities and career goals. UWS exists so that no warrior makes that journey alone. We believe in honoring service by ensuring every veteran has the tools, support, and community they need to thrive. For female veterans, that means access to resources designed with their realities in mind, mentorship from women who have walked the same path, and opportunities to lead and inspire others.

When women Veterans thrive, communities grow stronger. Through the combined efforts of our programs, our partners, and the women themselves, we are building a future where every female Veteran in the Upstate feels supported, connected, and empowered. Because their service matters, and so do they.

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RUPERT HUSE
VETERAN CENTER






#STAYWITHME
ROWING MARATHON

Kristen

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Kristen Timms served in the Air National Guard from May 2008 to December 2014 as a Material Management Specialist. Her decision to enlist came from a desire to develop strong leadership skills, build a meaningful career foundation, and gain experiences that would last a lifetime. The Air National Guard offered a clear path for growth, discipline, and purpose.

As a Material Management Specialist, Kristen's duties included handling supply chain logistics critical to mission readiness. This involved the management of aircraft parts, tools, and essential base equipment. She was involved in maintaining accountability systems, coordinating shipments, and ensuring accurate records that supported operational safety. Precision and dependability became her daily standards.

Kristen provided support for Operation Iraqi Freedom with logistical expertise that directly affected mission outcomes. The role required quick decision-making, problem-solving under pressure, and coordination between multiple units to ensure that resources reached the right place at the right time. The experience built confidence, adaptability, and a deep respect for teamwork.

Among the most valuable lessons that Kristen learned was the recognition of her inner strength. Military life cultivated adaptability and leadership, qualities that translated directly into civilian success. Her experiences built resilience that continues to shape both her professional and personal life today.

Following separation from the military, Kristen's next chapter unfolded with a focus on family, education, and career development. A teenage daughter remains a source of pride and motivation. Marriage in 2023 marked a new beginning with a supportive partner who has been part of life since 2018. Together, the couple relocated from New York to South Carolina, embracing new opportunities and community connections.

In her civilian life, Kristen works as an esthetician allowing continued service to others by helping clients gain confidence, find peace, and practice self-care. Professionalism, attention to detail, and empathy, all refined in uniform, remain at the heart of her work. Continued involvement in veteran circles provides a way to mentor others, especially women adjusting to civilian life.

Volunteerism and community engagement continue to reflect the values Kristen embraced during her time in service. Time spent supporting Veterans and their families reinforces the same spirit of teamwork once shared in uniform.

Kristen's message to the public is that women veterans are capable, disciplined, and resilient. Military women bring strength and leadership to every environment. For those transitioning, the guidance Kristen offers is focused on connecting with veteran communities, sharing experiences, and recognizing the worth gained through service. Empowerment grows when women support one another.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"She believed she could,
so she did."
~ R.S. Grey
- Scoring Wilder



WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Use your fear ... it can take you to the place where you store your courage."

~ Amelia Earhart

Holly

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Holly Vaughan served in the United States Army, the Army Reserves, and the South Carolina National Guard from 1983 to 2003 as a military police K-9 handler, operating room technician, civil affairs specialist, and marksmanship training instructor. She enlisted immediately after high school, following the example of her mother, an Army Reserve recruiter; her father, who retired from the Air Force; and her sister, who served full-time in the Army Reserve.

Boot camp tested Holly's resolve, taught her to channel courage and helped her discover her hidden strength. Later in her career, she bécame a full-time civil affairs specialist. As such, she helped prepare and qualify soldiers for deployment to Bosnia.

Alongside her military service, Holly built a civilian career in law enforcement, fulfilling her dream of becoming a K-9 handler and firearms instructor. By invitation, she joined the South Carolina National Guard pistol team, representing the Guard in competitions and instructing soldiers in rifle qualifications. Her dual roles reflected her passion for service, training, and leadership. After 20 years of combined duty, she retired with distinction.

Following her retirement, Holly continued to serve her community. She volunteers with her local fire department and is an active member of Vets Helping Vets in Anderson, S.C., where she mentors fellow veterans and supports local outreach. She is married to her husband of 12 years, a career firefighter, and together they share a lively home with three Dalmatians, a French Bulldog, and seven chickens. Beyond her family and volunteer work, Holly enjoys traveling, cruising, crafting, and spending time with her dogs.

Holly reflects that women in the military have always had to work harder to earn the same recognition as their male peers, proving themselves through strength, resilience, and self-reliance. She encourages other women Veterans to acknowledge the sacrifices of service and seek connections with fellow women Veterans. By sharing their stories, she believes they can foster greater understanding of the unique challenges women face in uniform.





LaShonda

BY SHERYL BINETTI

LaShonda Prim served in the United States Army from January 7, 2001, to July 21, 2005, as a unit supply specialist. Her decision to enlist was shaped by determination. With three years in Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC), she knew the Army could provide both financial stability and a sense of purpose for herself and her newborn son.

As a supply specialist, she maintained her unit's equipment, weapons, and essential gear—receiving, inspecting, and issuing supplies. The role built her confidence and leadership skills while she balanced the responsibilities of soldier, mother, and wife. A defining moment came when her work ethic was honored with an Army Commendation Medal, a Noncommissioned Officers Association coin, and a promotion to E-4—all in the same ceremony. The recognition affirmed that even when she felt unseen, her contributions made a lasting impact.

Her dedication earned additional recognition, including two Army Commendation Medals, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and others. She credits the Army with instilling a lifelong commitment to integrity and excellence.

Life after service continues to reflect her devotion to family and community. Alongside her husband, retired Marine Aswad Prim, and her service dog, Snow Bella, they are raising seven children: AJ, Brandon, Kai'Asya, Darius, Antoine, Asjiah, and Aiyana. The family's military legacy continues through her son Brandon, now serving in the United States Marine Corps.

Although living with a chronic illness, she refuses to let disability define her. LaShonda mentors in Spartanburg District 5 schools, writes, and speaks as a transformational leader, sharing her story of resilience during and after military service. She founded Dazzling Divas Empowering Women Toward Success and is a member of Leadership Ladies of the Upstate, an organization devoted to uplifting women through education and inspiration. More about her work can be found at **www.lashondaprim.com**

Her passion remains helping women transform their lives, turn struggles into opportunities, and embrace self-care while pursuing success.

She wants the public to know that women Veterans are resilient, skilled, and dedicated, representing about 10 percent of the veteran population—a number that will continue to grow.

To fellow women transitioning from military to civilian life, Lashonda offers this wisdom: "Separating from military service isn't the end—it's a brand new beginning. Greatness is within you, in and out of uniform, and no one can do you better than you. Be the great woman Veteran you've been called to be."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Let everything you do be done with integrity, love, and excellence."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Whether you
think you can, or
you think you can't,
you are right."
~ Henry Ford

Erin

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Erin Thomas served in the United States Marine Corps from October 1977 to October 1980 as a bandsman, playing flute and piccolo. Military service runs deep in Erin's Canadian family. She was the first American-born member to continue the tradition. Her grandfather served in the Royal Canadian Cavalry, her father in the Royal Canadian Navy, and her sisters in the United States Navy. Her brother flew helicopters during the Vietnam War and was one of 134 Canadians who died fighting for the United States. Her sons later carried the legacy forward in the United States Air Force. With limited financial options after high school, Erin followed her family's path and enlisted in the Marines. "The military is what we knew," she recalls.

As a Marine bandsman, Erin's role was to inspire. She describes her unit's performances as "recruiting in action," with crisp uniforms and music that showcased the pride and discipline of the Marine Corps. While her service did not include combat, she takes pride in representing the Marines through music that uplifted and motivated others.

Erin's most important takeaway is that the family values she was raised with—loyalty, respect, and service—were also at the heart of the Marine Corps. "Once a Marine, always a Marine," she says. Although her enlistment was short, she is proud to have served her country and continues to reflect the spirit of service in her civilian life.

Since the 1990s, Erin has owned her own business, dedicating her career to helping others find strength and healing. She works as a clinical hypnotherapist, life coach, and Reiki Master Teacher, supporting veterans and her community through wellness. She teaches parenting and hypnobirthing classes, often offering free counseling for those in need, and provides coping skills workshops. With a special passion for children, particularly those who are atypical, she also continues her lifelong love of music as a private teacher.

Family is central to Erin's life. She is the proud mother of three sons—two who served in the Air Force and one who now works as a peer specialist. She also cherishes time with her grandchildren.

Through her membership in the American Legion, Erin enjoys staying connected to her veteran community.

Erin wants the public to know that women Veterans have value, worth, and purpose. She encourages women transitioning out of service to seek veteran communities such as the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. "You don't have to do this alone," she reminds them.





Virginia

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Virginia Kovalcik served in the United States Air Force from November 1978 to August 1983 as a dog handler with the Security Police.

Raised in Florida, Virginia longed to move west and saw the Air Force as her opportunity for adventure. She enlisted with no guaranteed job title , but during basic training a security police officer introduced her to the security police force and the chance to work with dogs. She graduated from the Air Force Police Academy with honors and went on to join the K-9 program, launching a career that changed her life. Virginia's first overseas tour took her to Korea, where she worked as a patrol dog handler. Her duties mirrored those of civilian law enforcement: patrolling, responding to criminal activity, and keeping the base secure. She later transferred to Scott Air Force Base, Ill., where she retrained as a narcotics detection dog handler while continuing her law enforcement responsibilities.

One of her proudest moments came when Virginia saved a mother and child during a tornado. She pulled them into a ditch and shielded them with her body, protecting them until the storm passed, earning the Air Force Achievement Medal. It was that moment that best reflected the training and courage the Air Force gave her. What began as a way out of Florida turned into her 30-year career in law enforcement.

Virginia and her husband, a firefighter, just celebrated 43 years of marriage. He went on to serve as a fire chief in many cities. Their two sons are firefighters in Asheville, NC. They also have three grandsons.

For more than 50 years, Virginia has competed in barrel racing, traveling across the country to race, and she still enjoys the sport. She and her husband run a 35-acre horse farm in Travelers Rest, SC. There, they care for horses, dogs, peacocks, and chickens.

Virginia believes women Veterans have always been present, strong, and capable. She reminds younger women that service does not erase femininity — it expands opportunities.

For her fellow women Veterans, Virginia encourages you to seek connection in civilian life, where bonds may take more effort but are just as valuable.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"There's a reason for everything that happens. You may not know why for years, but God has a plan."

THE HEART O

Women uplifting women through

Behind the scenes, the camaraderie among women Veterans is undeniable. Between poses and preparations, **laughter** flows easily—shared in a way only those with similar journeys can truly understand. More than photos, these moments honor and preserve their service, capturing the true heart of She Served: **women uplifting women** and celebrating collective strength.

You leave the experience knowing you are valuable, brave, special and realizing you count! **Baena LaBrecque**

I loved being part of the She Served Initiative photo shoot—it was empowering and deeply meaningful. Sharing my story as a woman veteran allows me to honor my journey and not only inspire but to remind other women Veterans that their voices and experiences matter. **LaKeisha Cannon**

The experience made me feel that someone knows we were contributors to the military team; our roles were important and we deserve to have our voices heard. SHE, THANK YOU! **Princella Bridges**

Let me first say that the women who were over the event made me feel like a superstar. They even let me include my service dog in the photos. **LaShonda Prim**





E SHE SERVED

n strength, laughter & sisterhood









The photoshoot was fun. It was a nice reminder that at one time I did something important, something bigger than myself.

Eva Vega



Sharing my story makes me feel seen as a Veteran who happens to be a woman and not a woman who happens to be a Veteran.

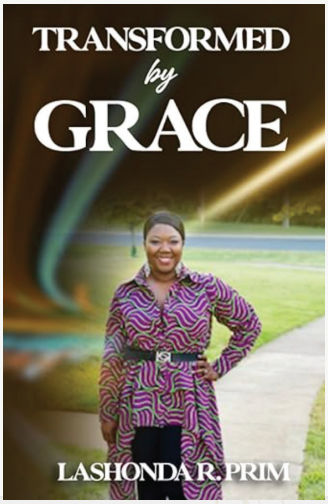
Elizabeth Taggart



Recommended reading

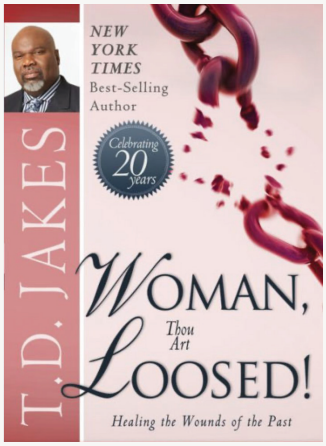
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Transformed by Lashondra R. Prim



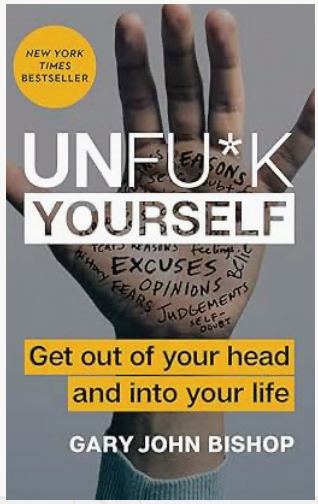
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Woman, Thou Art Loosed! By T.D. Jakes



3

*Unfu*k Yourself: Get Out of Your Head and Into Your Life By Gary John Bishop*



Looking for books that spotlight the strength, sacrifice, and resilience of women in the military? Each of these books sheds light on different aspects of military women's experiences — raw, real, and unforgettable.

In this issue of She Served Magazine, we highlight three powerful books chosen by women who know firsthand the strength, resilience, and faith required to overcome life's challenges. These selections, two recommended by United States Navy Veteran Eva Vega Featured on page 30 and one by author and featured Army Veteran LaShonda R. Prim (see page 38), offer encouragement, truth, and practical guidance for women at every stage of their personal journeys.

We begin with ***Transform by Grace by LaShonda R. Prim***, a compelling and deeply honest guide for women ready to reclaim their lives and step boldly into their God-given purpose. Drawing from her own difficult chapters, including navigating single motherhood with three young children, LaShonda shows how life's most painful disruptions can become divine redirections. Through practical steps, spiritual wisdom, and unwavering hope, she reminds readers that God not only fulfills His promises but also instills every woman with worth, strength, and purpose. Her message is clear: even the darkest places can be transformed not merely for our good, but for God's glory.

U.S. Navy Veteran Eva Vega recommends ***Woman, Thou Art Loosed! by T.D. Jakes***, a timeless classic that has brought healing to millions of women. Jakes offers a balm for wounds often carried in silence, including trauma, heartbreak, insecurity, abuse, and disappointment. His words reach the hidden corners of the feminine heart, offering cleansing, restoration, and liberation. This powerful book breaks emotional and spiritual shackles, encouraging women to rise above their past and embrace the freedom God intended.

Eva Vega's second recommendation, ***Unfuk Yourself: Get Out of Your Head and into Your Life by Gary John Bishop,*** brings a sharp, no-nonsense voice to the personal growth space. With refreshing bluntness and tough love, Bishop challenges readers to confront the self-limiting beliefs that hold them back. In a world filled with noise, fear, and uncertainty, this book serves as a final push toward becoming the strongest, most resilient version of oneself. It is a call to stop overthinking, take action, and claim the life you are meant to live.

VETERAN BUSINESS DIRECTORY

SUPPORTING **WOMEN VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES** IS A CRUCIAL STEP TOWARD FOSTERING EQUALITY & EMPOWERMENT. WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE MILITARY BRING UNIQUE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL WORLD, AND BY SUPPORTING THEIR VENTURES, WE NOT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SACRIFICE BUT ALSO HARNESS THEIR POTENTIAL AS VALUABLE CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR ECONOMY.

upstate WARRIOR solution

https://upstatewarriorsolution.org/monthly-events/

한국여성협회 KOREAN WOMEN'S Association of Carolinas

Korean War Veterans Association, Foothills Chapter #301

THE EXECUTIVE Assist HELPING BUSINESSES THRIVE

https://msha.ke/theexecutiveassist

MILITARY WOMEN Hope4Veterans STRONG

www.Hope4veterans.org

NEW U FITNESS

www.newufitnessjax.com

GI GREEN VETERANS GROW TOGETHER

https://hope4veterans.org/board-of-directors/GIGreen.org

Autumn Faith

www.autumnfaithcompany.com

CHRISTOPHER BURKS SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

https://christopherburksscholarshipfoundationinc.org

CONSCIOUSLY AWARE

www.consciouslyaware.com

ANCHORED FAMILY CHIROPRACTIC

https://anchoredchirojax.com/

KIMBERLY MULLINS

www.kmullins.shop

Wildflower Massage

https://linktr.ee/wildflower_massage

CJ Forward MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

www.straightforwardhomesales.com

design conciege @Home

https://designconciergeathome.com

HOPE CENTER FOR VETERANS

https://hopecenterforveterans.org/

Humble Warrior WELLNESS & YOGA

humblewarrior.org/

Garden Believer & Aquascaping

www.facebook.com/GardenBeliever/

VILLAGERS FOR VETERANS HELPING VETERANS REGAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE

www.villagersforveterans.org

The PEACH Pit HORSES helping heal your heart and mind

https://thepeachpitgeorgia.org

Georgia Military Women

www.facebook.com/georgiamilitarywomen/

Shon Barnwell EVENTS

www.barnwellevents.com/

IH Inner Harmony WELLNESS CENTER

https://www.innerharmonywellness.co/

FOOT SOLUTIONS

www.footsolutions.com/greenville

*Did you know **women** are the **fastest-growing** segment of the military and Veteran populations? That's just one of the reasons we bring you ...* ***She Served.***

*Every individual featured in this magazine is **unique**, yet they share **similar** experiences from active duty service to what happened in the days, months and years after She Served.*

*We hope the Veterans we featured in this issue of this magazine **inspired you** with examples of their leadership, resourcefulness, knowledge and sacrifice.*

Your generosity enables us to continue the She Served Initiative. Donations help us continue to tell the **amazing stories of our women Veterans.** Additionally, it furthers our mission to raise awareness that women served in the United States Military **and** are Veterans too.

You can make a donation on the website, **https://sheservedinitiative.org/donate** or scan the QR code.

She Served is a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization registered in the State of Georgia.