SHE SERVED

MAGAZINE

Celebrating Women Veterans



Inside:

13 WOMEN VETERANS SHARING THEIR STORY

MEET WWII VETERAN: VERNA "BUNNY" FARMER WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

CULTIVATE SERENITY DURING TRANSITION

FINDING PURPOSE AND PEACE

Debut issue:

SEPTEMBER 2023

EDITORIAL STAFF

MANAGING EDITOR & PHOTOGRAPHER
Martina Schmidt

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Kimberly Mortson

EXECUTIVE EDITORS
Martina Schmidt, Bill Bean, Sheryl Binetti, Tracy Farley, Ange Keskey and Julie Miller

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS
Vicki Seal Knoch Raquel Durden

CONNECT WITH US

WEBSITE
www.sheservedinitiative.org

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS
martina@sheservedinitiative.org

INSTAGRAM
@She.served

FACEBOOK
@SheServedcelebratingwomenveterans







HOST A VETERAN PHOTO SHOOT

To host a **She Served** event visit the website: 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). I can comfortably accommodate approximately 10 women a day if the timeslots are scheduled in advance.

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2-3	Editorial Staff and Table of Contents
4-5	Letter from Martina
6-7	Veteran Verna "Bunny" Farmer
8-9	Veteran Jennie Trammell
10-11	Veteran Amy Stevens
12-13	Veteran Anna Sanchez
14-15	Yoga: Cultivate Serenity During Life's Transitions *by Raquel Durden*
16-17	Veteran Raquel Durden
19-23	Board of Directors Spotlight: Veterans Julie Miller and Tracy Farley
24-25	Veteran Vicki Seal Knoch
26-27	Finding Purpose and Peace *by Vicki Seal Knoch*
28-29	Veteran Gina Sein
30-31	Veteran India Bridgette
32-33	Veteran Pamela Abraham
34-35	Veteran Pamela Collum
36-37	Veteran Sonya White
38-39	Veteran Stephanie McRae
40-41	Veteran Charlie Green
42-43	Operation Shower: Bringing Joy to Military Families
44	She Served Thank You + Behind the Lens Photo Collage
45	How to Contribute to She Served


WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“Non, je ne regretted rien."
~ Edith Piaf
Nikon
Celebrating Women Veterans

Women from all walks of life serve in all branches of the United States military, in all ranks and levels of authority, and make significant contributions every day. **Over two million veterans in the United States are women.** Also, according to the Veterans Administration, about 280,000 women have served in Afghanistan or Iraq since September 11, 2001. Women now serve in combat roles and all levels of leadership positions.

While women have always served their country and played an important role in the military, they have had to overcome many obstacles to get where they are today. All too often, we overlook these women who served alongside men. For example, when visiting the Veterans Administration, many people still equate Veterans with men and assume that the women in the waiting room are veterans' daughters or wives. Being a retired veteran myself, I have experienced many instances in which I was believed to be the **wife** of a veteran and not the **actual Veteran**.

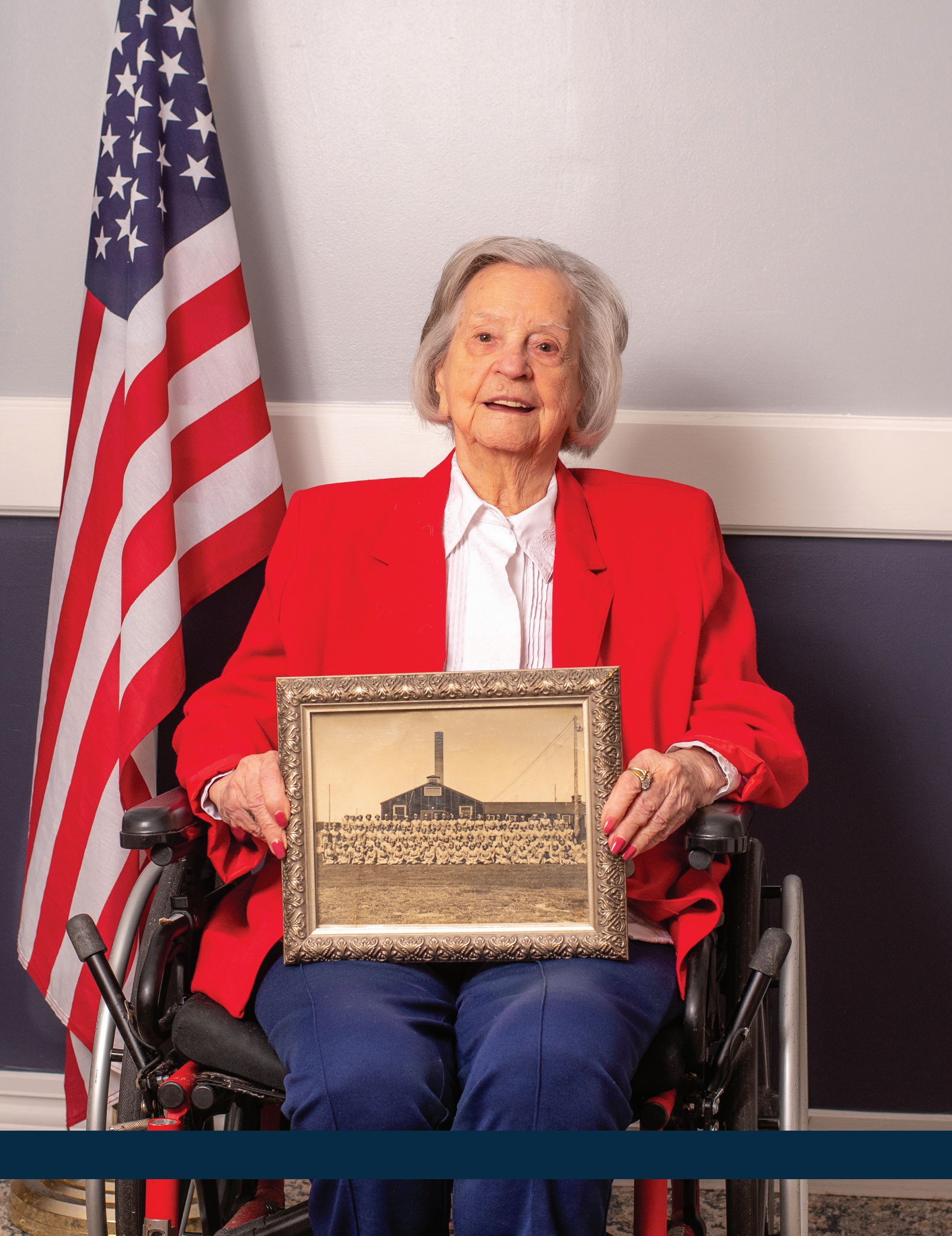
Out of that frustration, the "**She Served Initiative**" was born. As a professional photographer, I felt I could contribute in a small way to bring much-deserved attention to women veterans. Little did I know how much healing the project would bring to me. Reconnecting with fellow veterans helps me deal with my own anxieties about past military experiences and has made me realize that I am not alone in navigating the many emotions of being a woman Veteran. During our photo sessions, we chat, exchange experiences, discuss challenges, and reminisce about our time in the military. Sometimes we shed tears but mostly we rejoice in all that we can do.

Almost all the women I photograph have a servant heart and serve their community in one way or another. From establishing non-profit organizations that help fellow veterans, to writing about unique military experiences, to establishing social media groups that allow women veterans to connect, the talents and passions of these strong women are amazing and deserve celebration. So please take a moment and page through my magazine to meet these **incredible women Veterans** and get inspired!





Martina Schmidt



Verna "Bunny"

Verna "Bunny" Farmer (Goolsby) entered the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in February 1945. Family records show that her last assignment was with the 400th Army Air Force Base Unit at Hamilton Field, California. She was honorably discharged in July 1946. While she served, Bunny provided administrative support for various commands. Bunny's military citations include the **Good Conduct Ribbon, American Theatre Ribbon** and the **World War II Victory Medal.**

Bunny has many more memories of supporting the war effort during WWII. She recalls being involved in flying operations such as ferrying equipment within the United States. Her daughter Olivia recalls Bunny telling her about a time she earned a certificate from De Paul University that qualified her to build electronics for military vehicles.

Bunny was born and raised in Naylor, Georgia, where her father owned a dairy farm. Her family had a giving heart and always left room at their dinner table for the less fortunate. She recalls her father always encouraged her brother to join the military during WWII, because he believed it was their duty to help in the war effort. When Bunny realized that her brother could not qualify for the military service, she was determined to do her part for her country and joined the war effort.

Bunny enjoyed her time in the military and said that she liked meeting new people and going wherever the military would send her. While in the military, Bunny met her husband William Farmer at a Saturday night dance. She recalls that he was not a good dancer, but she "kept him anyway." Eventually they fell in love and got married. When they decided to start a family, Bunny resigned from the military to follow Bill to his various assignments overseas and stateside.

At age 98, Bunny now lives at Magnolia Place of Roswell, Georgia, an assisted living facility. She is still very active and participates in all the activities that are being offered at Magnolia Place. She is also an avid reader and loves drawing with water colors. Bunny has two daughters, Patricia and Olivia, five grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.

Bunny would like the public to know that women served in the military too, and if there is ever any doubt, to "set them straight."





Jennie

Jennie Trammell served in the United States Army as an Administrative Specialist, with Instructor Identifier, and as a Transportation Management Coordinator. She also served in administrative security support during Desert Shield/ Desert Storm prior to her retirement.

Jennies most significant take away from her military service was the strong leadership and communication between the senior NCO's and the lower ranking enlisted. Everyone was trained with skill traits to complete the overall mission. Respect was given and earned day to day, and in her opinion produced the best Non-Commissioned Officers.

Jennie has three adult children, a daughter aged 41 and two sons aged 40 and 24. She has five grandchildren, ages 17, 15, 7, 3, and 2. With her family, she enjoys traveling to the beach, visiting museums of different cultures, and attending professional basketball, football, and baseball games. Bowling, riding motorcycles, and go carts are just a few more of the fun things they do.

Jennie is passionate about crafting and sewing. She loves to sew clothes and pillows for her family. Also, she will never pass up an opportunity to be on a motorcycle!

Jennie has just completed her masters in mental health and wellness with an emphasis in Community Mental Health Administration. She is a licensed counselor of marriage and family therapy.

Jennie volunteers for the valley rescue mission in Columbus, Georgia, she provides assistance to senior citizens in Troup County, and is also an Election Manager for one of the Election Precincts in Lagrange, Troup County in Georgia.

To her fellow sister Veterans, Jennie offers this advice: "Make sure you **get a strong mentor**. You need someone that believes in teaching the true traits of leadership. Accountability and structure is the foundation of your growth as a woman Veteran."







WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"You can't change anyone, but you can change how you deal with them or how much power you allow them to have over your peace of mind!"



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Live well, not large."

Amy

Amy Stevens served in the United States Navy for 15 years. She has been stationed in Japan, Korea, and Alaska and she participated in Operation Desert Storm as part of the Navy Reserve Military Sea Lift Command. Amy is most proud of her active-duty time as the Director of Education and Training for Navy Telecommunications Command Headquarters. She oversaw the upgrade of all Navy Communications Schools to incorporate internet technology.

Amy now lives in Marietta, Georgia with her little dog, Wildman Charlie. She has retired from the U.S. Department of Labor. Since retiring, Amy has become a Licensed Professional Counselor. As such, she served with the Georgia National Guard as a Director of Psychological Health. She was helpful during times of heavy engagement with Afghanistan and Iraq troop deployments. Currently, she specializes in onsite Critical Incident Response for active shooter and unexpected death scenarios.

Amy serves in the Atlanta military Veteran community as an advocate for mental health and woman Veteran issues. She is also the founder of Georgia Military Women. With over 5,000 members, this Facebook group offers valuable resources and in-person meetup opportunities for Georgia military women across the state. In addition, she is active as a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Manager volunteer and regularly deploys to natural disaster sites.

Amy would like the public to know that many women Veterans feel like their service is invisible or minimized. Women have been fully integrated into all branches of the military for 75 years, since 1948. Yet, when they attend events or approach agencies, they are passed over for recognition or services. Women veterans have significantly higher physical and mental health issues, unemployment, housing, and financial issues than their civilian counterparts. **Awareness and access to services is critical.**

To her fellow women Veterans, Amy has this advice: Keep showing up. Be sure to let others know that you are a Veteran. That is the only way awareness of women's issues can continue to expand. We need to work as a team to keep moving forward.





Anna

Anna Sanchez has served for 12 years in the United States Air Force Reserve and is still serving today. She began in 2011 as the Nursing OIC for the Mental Health Section at the 908th Aeronautical Staging Squadron (ASTS). Anna then became a line officer to the 94th AW as a Victim Advocate for the Sexual Assault and Response Program (SAPR). Later, she was deployed to the 8th FW in Korea as the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC).

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Anna moved back into nursing for the 94th ASTS. For her efforts during the pandemic, she was awarded the Humanitarian Award and Nurse of the Year in the Company Grade Officer category.

As the SARC for the 94th AW, Anna collaborated with various military branches and raised awareness of the SAPR program for Family Fun Day. She brought 60 military-friendly resources, the USO, 650 plates of food, gourmet coffee, massage therapy, and recreational, horticultural, and equine therapy to the 94th AW. Due to the event's success, she was tasked with organizing the Wing's Family Day, which was another successful collaboration with many military resources. Recently, she was promoted to Major, Field Grade Officer.

Anna's husband of 34 years also served in the Air Force. They have four wonderful grown children (Elis, Mihara, Isabella, and Adrianna) and two dogs (Bokchoy and Hope). Anna is dedicated to serving Veterans. She started the non-profit organization Hope Center for Veterans, where she helps veterans achieve meaningful lives after their service. In her civilian capacity, she is dual-certified in Psychiatric Mental Health and as a Family Nurse Practitioner at the VA hospital Emergency Psychiatry.

Anna would like the public to know that women in the military have different challenges to overcome. **So many women paved the way for us.** We continue to break barriers and show that we are capable of making decisions as leaders.

To her fellow Veterans, she has this advice: "Recognize the hardships but always celebrate every attained goal and win!"






WORDS TO LIVE BY:
Empowered women
empower women."

Yoga

WRITTEN BY RAQUEL DURDEN



Cultivate Serenity During Life's Transitions

Life is a journey filled with transitions, and veterans often experience two significant milestones. The first transition is during one's career change, while the second transition comes upon retirement (military or civilian). These transitions can bring positive change and excitement, as well as feelings of loss, stress, and anxiety. Practicing yoga during these transitions offers many benefits. Yoga is a holistic approach to improving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. When practiced regularly, yoga can lead to serenity. Serenity is a state of peace, calm, and lack of trouble. On your yoga mat, you can practice focusing your awareness on the present moment, while acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and sensations without judgment.



RAQUEL DURDEN, CHAIR — HUMBLE WARRIOR WELLNESS & YOGA, INC.

Specific benefits of practicing yoga during transitions:

NURTURING OVERALL WELL-BEING:

Career transitions and retirement often involve a change in daily routines. Engaging in yoga helps maintain and enhance physical well-being and mental clarity. You can strengthen, lengthen, and become more flexible. This flexibility might help you adapt to a new job, career, hobby, or routine. Yoga also cultivates your present-moment awareness. This can help veterans find new meaning and purpose in their lives and make more conscious decisions.

ENHANCE EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE:

Navigating career transitions or adjusting to retirement can be emotionally challenging. Yoga offers tools to reduce stress and cultivate emotional resilience. Through focused breathing exercises and mindfulness meditation, you can calm your mind during these periods of change.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION:

Separating or retiring from the military can sometimes leave veterans feeling isolated or disconnected. Yoga provides an opportunity to connect with a community of like-minded individuals. Join a yoga class, explore a workshop, or attend a retreat to foster a sense of belonging and support as well as enhance your well-being. This can help create that sisters-in-arms sense of camaraderie.

SELF-DISCOVERY:

Career transitions and retirement offer a unique opportunity for self-discovery. Yoga can serve as a catalyst. You practice mindfulness, being still, and introspection. In turn, you might uncover a former hobby, find a hidden talent, or cultivate a new interest during this transition phase of life.

Yoga offers a multitude of benefits for Veterans navigating career transitions or embarking on retirement. If you would like to explore the benefits of yoga, connect with the nonprofit Humble Warrior Wellness & Yoga. Connecting is as easy as visiting www.humblewarrior.org and subscribing by entering your email address. You will receive a monthly wellness newsletter, blog access, and notifications of yoga and other mindful programs. **So, make your career change or retirement an exciting chapter of life by exploring yoga**!

Raquel

Raquel Durden served in a myriad of roles within the United States Army. While in high school, she enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve to obtain money for college and travel the world. In college, Raquel quickly transitioned to a contracted Army ROTC Scholarship Cadet. She then served on active duty as a Finance Corps Officer and deployed twice including a combat tour to Somalia, Africa.

For family reasons, Raquel separated from the Army and rejoined the Army National Guard, where she was quickly brought back onto Active Guard and Reserve status as a Military Intelligence Officer. She served her remaining years in the Army National Guard in an active capacity. At every level of her career, Raquel was a commander: detachment command, company command, task force command, and battalion command.

Raquel's husband, Dave, is a retired U.S. Army Veteran with five deployments to Afghanistan. Their adult son is in the Georgia Army National Guard; he deployed to Afghanistan and completed a short tour in Germany. Their daughter-in-law is a law student at Boston University.

Currently, Raquel serves as the co-founder and chairwoman of Humble Warrior Wellness & Yoga, Inc., a non-profit that provides wellness experiences including retreats, workshops, and classes to women Veterans and women first responders. Humble Warrior teaches, shares, and explores wellness modalities to enhance lifestyle fitness and overall well-being for all humble warriors who attend classes or retreats. Please visit Humble Warrior's website at https://humblewarrior.org.

Raquel is an excellent example of a humble warrior. She is passionate about wellness, mindfulness, yoga, plant-based eating, traveling, gathering in small groups, and lifelong learning.

Raquel would like the public to know that women veterans have made tremendous contributions while serving in the military and in their current communities. Be sure to recognize and thank them for their service!

To her fellow women Veterans, Raquel has this advice: "As you serve our country and give of your talents, be sure to practice self-care and stay connected to supportive people. **You matter**!"





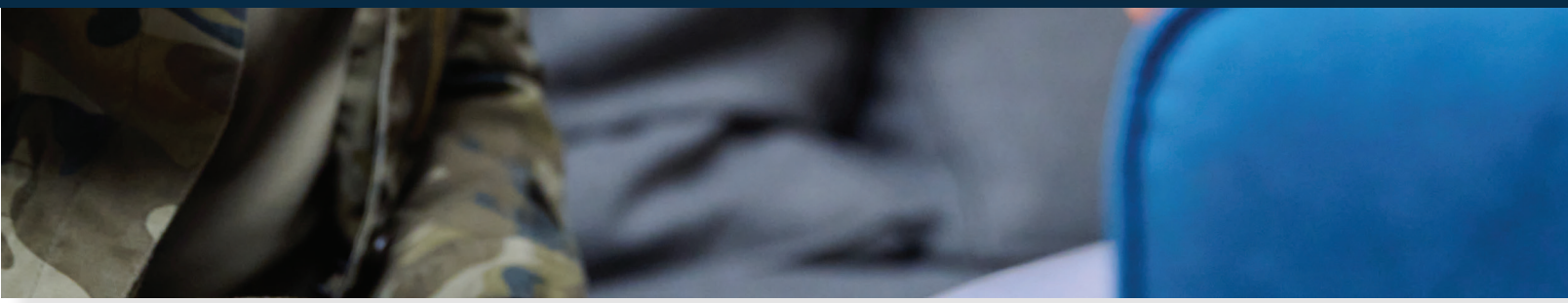
WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Transitions are important; notice who God brings into your life and removes."





VA Resources for Women

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



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


SHE SERVED
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT


WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"And into the
forest I go, to
lose my mind
and find my soul."
~ John Muir
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
Celebrating Women Veterans

Julie Miller

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Julie Miller is Vice Chairwoman of the She Served Initiative and served for 21 years in the United States Air Force as a Bio Environmental Engineering Technician. In this role, she performed health risk assessments to identify and quantify chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear hazards. She provided health risk communication to support the commander's decision-making and to prevent short- and long-term health effects on all military personnel on military installations and in overseas locations.

Julie is passionate about the Veteran community. She served as the first female commander at the American Legion Post 3 in Greenville, South Carolina. She also volunteers with the Honor Flight mission, for which she accompanies our nation's veterans who served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to Washington, D.C. so that they can visit the memorials built to commemorate their service and sacrifice.

Julie's dad was a World War II Veteran who served in India. Patriotism was taught and respected in her family. Julie is very proud to have served and honored her parents.

Currently, Julie works for Proterra Inc., as an Environmental Health and Safety Manager. In her free time, her passion is caring for the environment and taking care of the creatures in it. She is a wildlife rehabilitator and takes care primarily of birds of prey. She is also a beekeeper and loves to garden. Julie is married and has two children, Josh and Dana. She is also the proud grandmother of Josh's son Harrison.

Julie would like the public to know the following about women Veterans: Women Veterans deserve to feel recognized and valued as Veterans. We proudly served and made significant contributions, and we shouldn't have to wear a ball cap for people to understand that women are veterans too.

To her fellow women Veterans, she has the following advice: Don't ever be afraid to claim your service time. It doesn't matter where or how you served. You made sacrifices that have earned lifelong respect. Take care of yourself and let others take care of you too.





Tracy Farley

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Tracy Farley is a board member and secretary of the She Served Initiative. For four years, Tracy served in the United States Air Force as a Pharmacy Technician. After her military service, she obtained her nursing degree and now works as a registered nurse in the women's clinic at the VA in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Tracy is married to Eric and has three kids: Maggie, Gaberik, and Finn.

When Tracy is not busy with her family and work, she volunteers at a no-kill cat shelter and is very involved with Special Olympics. In her downtime, she likes to be creative, making jewelry and crocheting beanies for those cold, cold days in Minnesota. Tracy is also an avid football fan, a passion she shares with her son Finn. Once those two get into a game...watch out!

What would you like the public to know about women Veterans?
When interacting with women Veterans, the old-fashioned rule of "don't judge a book by the cover" is especially important. It's easy to judge someone based on their appearance, their behavior, or the choices they make. Take the time to get to know them. Listen, and if you are privileged enough, maybe they will share some of their story.

What advice do you have for your fellow veterans?
Take time for yourself. Love yourself. If you are having a tough time and are feeling stressed out, it's ok to pause and breathe! If you are taking too much on, it's OK to let something go.

> *"Remember the safety rule that flight attendants tell you before taking off: Always put on your own oxygen mask first before helping others. You cannot help others if you can't breathe yourself."*





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"If there is not struggle, there is not progress."





Finding purpose *and* peace

WRITTEN BY VICKI SEAL KNOCH

Retirement was supposed to be the brass ring but no one told me how hard it was going to be.

My Air Force career was a dream come true. I served in the medical career field, at 12 different duty stations, and deployed multiple times in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I achieved the highest enlisted rank and served in many prestigious positions such as technical instructor, First Sergeant, and Vice Commandant of the Senior Noncommissioned Officers Academy. I volunteered many hours in support of community activities and completed my master's degree while on active duty. I poured everything I had into work and felt like mentoring enlisted and guiding young officers was a calling of the highest caliber. But, like all good things, they had to come to an end. After 26 years, I started feeling burned out and wanted to retire. My family had been my biggest supporters and I was ready to be a full-time mom and wife.

My idea of being a "stay-at-home" mom looked a little bit like a popular TV show. I would wake up early, bound out of bed, and cook a nutritious breakfast for my loving mob. While the boys were at school, I would grow the most amazing garden and prepare fabulous dinners from farm-fresh ingredients. The house would be in pristine condition and I would finally catch up on all the hobbies I had neglected! It was a dream that I had been perfecting for the last 26 years. Unfortunately, no one told my family that they had a role to play in the fantasy.

The reality was that in my absence, my family had created a life of their own. My husband was a government contractor and travelled for work. He had a network of friends with wives whom I had nothing in common with. The boys were independent, with lots of activities and interests, and were not interested in creating Disney moments with their absentee mom. Even the dogs had their daily routine. The fantasy life I had envisioned was not working and I started feeling like no one needed me. In fact, it was not just a feeling they did not need me. **My family had survived without me for 26 years and were not keen on changing their lives just because I had retired.**

Retirement was not as simple as I had envisioned. It is not definitive in terms of closing one door and opening another. The Department of Defense acknowledges "The Transition" and tries to prepare you for success. The Transition Assistance Program

(TAP) provides information and training to ensure that service members transitioning from active duty are prepared for their next step in life, whether they are pursuing additional education or a vocational trade, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting a business.

But what happens when you do not fit into any of those categories, which is a struggle for many women? I had already completed my degrees and was not interested in starting a second career, so when I finished my terminal leave and the novelty wore off, I hit a brick wall. I was used to working 10- to 12-hour workdays with loads of responsibility on my shoulders. My subordinates depended on my guidance, and my superiors sought my advice. My mission was clear, and I played a significant role in achieving the objectives.

Once I retired, I had no objectives, and no one needed my expertise. I became very depressed but could not understand why this was not the happiest time of my life. Only after I entered therapy did I begin to understand that my depression was a normal part of the transition. My doctor equated my experience as going from being a high-level superstar to being invisible. **I no longer commanded respect by my stripes; I was just another mom.** My lack of a "mission" made me feel like I had no purpose, which contributed to my unhappiness. I was certain that I did not want a job but I needed something to pull myself out of the free fall I was in.

Now, everyone's experience is different, and some do not struggle with the change. However, for many female veterans, it comes as a culture shock and can involve a lengthy transition period. Depression, isolation, loneliness, and loss of purpose are common struggles among those transitioning from military to civilian life. Many also face challenges with applying for a civilian job for the first time or reentering the workforce. For example, many employers see male veterans as role models with years of leadership experience while viewing female Veterans as "too old" for new hires. All these experiences and feelings are normal but can be hard to navigate alone.

Eventually, I found a new purpose for my life but it took me almost five years to feel productive again. Here are a few recommendations (**far right column**) from my own experience to help you make that journey.

This summer will be the 10-year anniversary of my retirement from active duty. The transition has been rocky but I am living life to the fullest. The best advice I can give is to make a realistic plan for life after the military but be willing to step outside your comfort zone. Talk to other female veterans, utilize the resources available, and give yourself some grace. It might take a while to find your purpose in this next chapter but just know that you are not alone.

#1 FIND YOUR NEW TRIBE

The military gives you a sense of camaraderie and belonging but when you leave, that comfort zone does not always follow you. I was lucky that I retired close to my best friend (who was also retired from the military) but I also needed to make connections with people who had similar interests. I started kayaking and playing golf, which introduced me to a new social circle.

#2 FIND A NEW PASSION

After moving further into my retirement transition, I realized that I no longer wanted to be in charge or be a "mover and shaker." I wanted to enjoy life at a much slower pace but still have an influence on future generations. A friend coaxed me back into youth sports and I started serving as a part-time assistant coach for girls' volleyball. Within a couple of years, this has become my primary occupation. I love to coach! It gives me a sense of fulfillment that I dare say exceeds my level of satisfaction as a senior noncommissioned officer. However, 10 years ago, if you had asked me what I would be doing, coaching would **NEVER** have entered my mind.

#3 DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

I would never have reached this point in my life without my friends and mental health services. I resisted therapy when I first retired because of the stigmas associated with therapy. However, working with an objective professional helped me focus on the critical areas. Many times, my therapist would point out a simple observation that would resonate with me for weeks! Therapy is not a one-time fix-all; I have been back several times over the last decade, and it has helped me live my best life.


WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Nothing changes until you
do something different."

Vicki

Vicki Seal Knoch served in the United States Air Force for 26 years as a Bioenvironmental Engineering Technician. She also served as First Sergeant at Hurlburt Field in Florida and the United States Air Force Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Vicki's career culminated in her role as Vice Commandant at the Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officers Academy at Gunter Air Force Base. She says that her proudest moment in the US Air Force was her deployed role as the First Sergeant for AF Special Operations flying missions in Afghanistan.

After retirement, Vicki worked as an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland Global Campus, guiding enlisted members of all services in achieving their educational goals. Now, she is a full-time coach for club and high school volleyball teams, emphasizing lessons in leadership, work ethic, and self-advocacy.

Vicki has two grown children: Tyler, 34, an urban planner with the City of Tallahassee, and Dylan, 21, who is also serving in the United States Air Force.

She would like the public to know that **women serve in all capacities and at all locations around the globe but do not receive the same recognition as their male counterparts**.

"After retirement, we are often overlooked for opportunities because stereotypes still exist. More companies need to recognize these gaps and provide more internships specifically to help female Veterans in their transitions."

To her fellow women Veterans, Vicki says, "Give yourself the same level of compassion and grace that you would offer to a friend. It is ok to ask for help, we are not in this alone."





Gina

Gina Sein served in the armed forces for 27 years, starting in the United States Air Force as an Aircrew Egress and an Aircrew Life Support Technician on various aircraft. After 9/11, she assisted with the transportation of vital personnel and rescue dogs to New York and Virginia. Next, she served as a recruiter and non-commissioned officer in charge of the Army's Puerto Rican National Guard Recruitment Sustainment Program, where she provided guidance in both recruitment and retention.

During her time as a recruiter, Gina was moved by the gratitude of the people whose lives she changed. She accomplished all this while successfully raising her daughter as a single mom. Gina is now married and a grandmother to her 13-year-old grandson. She and her husband live with her emotional support dog Ceibana, two other dogs, two hens, and two roosters.

Gina is passionate about animal welfare. For 17 years, she has served on the board of an animal sanctuary. In 2021, she graduated from Greenville Technical College as a veterinarian assistant, and is committed to helping animals and people. She is also a member of the South Carolina Women of the Upstate and Vets Helping Vets.

Gina would like the public to know that we exist. We have been around since World War I, and we are here to do what is needed to serve our country. We don't want special treatment, just equality for what we do.

To her fellow women who have served, Gina wants you to never forget that we are here for one another and we know of your struggles.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Together, we are stronger."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"The triumph can't be had
without the struggle."
~ Wilma Rudolph

India

India Bridgette served for six years in the United States Marine Corps as a Legal Services Specialist for the office of the Judge Advocate General. She assisted with operational, managerial, clerical, and administrative duties.

India's passion is and always has been track and field. While she was a Marine, it was a very proud moment for her to run in the All-Service Track & Field meet at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. **She won four gold medals representing the Marine Corps**. India is currently nationally ranked and competes as a masters track and field athlete. In 2019, she ran in four races at the National Senior Olympics in Albuquerque, NM. Her 4x100m relay results broke a new national record for her age group.

In 2022, India broke the Women's 60 Indoor 60m record and the Outdoor 100m record. She was named Women's 60 Female Athlete of the Year by the USATF Masters Track and Field Association. In March 2023, India competed for Team USA at the World Masters Indoor Championships in Toruń, Poland. There, she placed second in the world in the 60m and third in the world in the 200m. She also won two gold medals in the mixed 4x200m relay consisting of two men and two women. India ran with the women's 55-59 age group in the 4x200m relay and won gold while setting a new American record!

India has three children (two sons and a daughter who is currently a sophomore in college) and two beautiful granddaughters. She says her children have been the biggest supporters of her running. Her eldest son says, "She inspires me to stay healthy and work out!" India says that her upbringing and military training give her the courage and confidence to continue running. Her daughter recently asked her, "Mom, how long are you going to run?" Her response: "As long as I CAN run."

India would like the public to know that women Veterans are capable of accomplishing anything they set their minds to. "We are, and have always been, a very intricate part of our armed forces. I am very proud of every woman veteran who served."

For her fellow women veterans, India suggests reaching out to Veteran sisters, regardless of the branch, and getting involved. "We have set the path and made the way for those women who are coming through the ranks after us. It is very important for them to see that we are still proud and supporting them."





Pamela

Pamela Abraham served in the United States Air Force for 26 years. She held two specialties: Services Specialist and Education and Training Specialist. In the latter role, Pamela was the Major Command Functional Training Manager for the European Theater. She served during Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, and Enduring Freedom.

Pamela comes from a strong military background. Her grandfather, father, stepfather, and uncle all served in the military. Her husband, Eric, is retired from the Air Force and competed on the Survivor reality television show.

Her most significant takeaway from her time in the service is: If you lead by example and present yourself in a positive manner, you'll be amazed at how many people you can influence. That influence can pave the way for greater things and many success stories to come.

Pamela is truly passionate about setting up people for success. Currently, she develops curricula for medical enlisted personnel attending technical training, all of whom represent the five armed services. She's also involved with American Veterans, an organization that supports veterans and their families through a variety of programs and projects. In addition, she likes to decorate and plan events.

Pamela would like to share with the public the fact that **women Veterans are an extraordinary group**. The public sees heroic actions but what's not seen is everything behind the scenes: having to prove they're just as capable in key positions that were predominantly male; finding the balance between fierce and tough but nurturing without seeming weak; facing physical challenges; and so much more. Their strength and perseverance are greatly underestimated.

Pamela's message to her fellow women Veterans is as follows: "First of all, stay true to yourself. Don't let anyone compromise your integrity. Surround yourself with positive people. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I can guarantee that whatever your struggle is, it's not the first. Learn from those with similar stories. Take mistakes and use them as a teaching step. You can learn and grow from both positive and negative."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"If you don't get out there and define yourself, you'll be quickly and inaccurately defined by others."
~ Michelle Obama




WORDS TO LIVE BY:
“Honor Thyself! We do rule, all over the world."

Pamela

Pamela Collum served in the United States Army for 20 years as a Pharmacy Technician. She supported Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm with the 86 Evacuation Hospital in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and later served as a Pharmacy Instructor at the Army Medical Center and School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Pamela was a young woman in the 1970s and the oldest of nine children. She was searching for direction in her life when, as she says, the "Army extended me an opportunity for me to serve my country." She is very grateful for all the adventures, opportunities, and growth that the military life offered her.

Pamela met her husband while in the military and also gave birth to her two sons. **At the time, after becoming pregnant, she was allowed to continue her military career only because of recently updated legislation**.

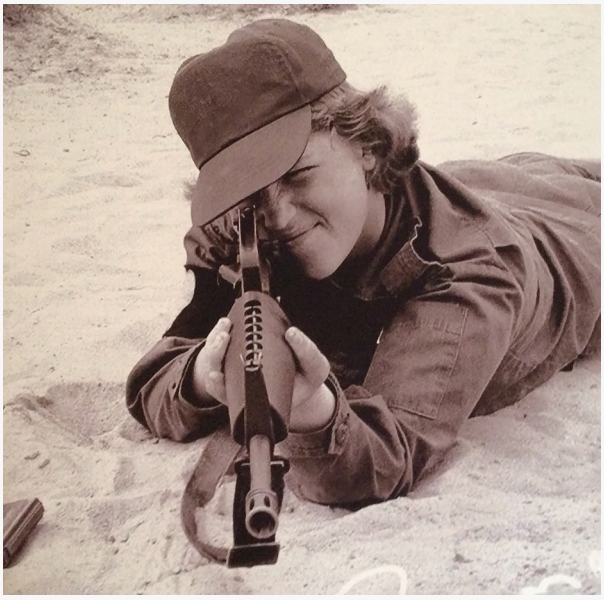
After retiring from the Army, Pamela used the GI Bill to attend nursing school in San Antonio, Texas and become a registered nurse. She spent her nursing career primarily caring for cardiac patients and also providing in-home support to families and children needing medically fragile care.

Today Pamela is retired and a volunteer for her church, assisting with senior membership and monthly luncheons. She is also a member of the Columbia Quilters Guild and participates in the Quilts of Valor group, which enlists quilters to make patriotic quilts and awards them to Veterans. She also loves to garden.

What Pamela most wants people to know about women Veterans is "We are here! We served, and we contribute greatly to our country and communities."

To her fellow women Veterans, she would like to pass along the following: "Reach out! Don't suffer in silence. Someone has the knowledge and connections to help."





Sonya

Sonya White served in the United States Army for 20 years as a medic and a logistician. She served as a combat medic during Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, providing medical care to deployed personnel. Upon returning from her first deployment in support of Iraqi Freedom, Sonya developed PTSD and had to learn how to adapt and deal with its symptoms. Just as she learned how to cope, she deployed again as a combat medic in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While Sonya still struggles with PTSD, she has learned important tools to adjust and adapt.

Sonya's most significant takeaway from her time in the Army is that when you serve with people in trying situations, you build unbreakable bonds that your blood relatives will never understand.

Currently, Sonya works at Central Georgia Technical College at the Veterans Center in Warner Robbins, Georgia. As the Community Resource and Resiliency Coordinator, she helps veterans navigate and explore all the available educational resources.

Sonya is also a Peer Leader for the Women Veteran Network (WoVeN www.wovenwomenvets.org/). WoVeN provides a unique social network of women Veterans to foster connections and build relationships in local communities and across the nation.

Sonya encourages her fellow women Veterans to **stick together and help each other out, just as they did in the military.** "Lend a helping hand to other women veterans. This will make our journey a little easier."






WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Start your day off wonderful and the worst it can end is good."


WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Love is that condition in the healing spirit so profound that it allows us to forgive."
~ Maya Angelou

Stephanie

Stephanie McRae served in the United States Army for four years as a Chemical Reconnaissance Specialist.

Her best time in the Army was her deployment to Korea. There, she became the first African American woman operating and in command of the M93A1 Fox Reconnaissance Vehicle. In addition to her regular duties, she served the local youth through art and sports projects.

Stephanie has three children and currently works as an expressive therapist and tutor for school-aged children. She loves creative projects such as sewing and beading. In addition, she is passionate about music and dance and loves spending time with her family.

Stephanie would like the public to know that women veterans are connected to service to humanity. Many of us are mothers, with or without living children. **Our wounds and injuries are uniquely suppressed but they are real.** We are veterans.

To her fellow women Veterans, she has this simple but important advice: "Reach out and connect."





Charlie

Charlie Green served in the United States Air Force for 10 years. She served during Operation Enduring Freedom and deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Charlie also aided in recovery operations at the Pentagon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Charlie comes from a military rich family. Her Grandmother's youngest brother was a part of the Tuskegee Airman as a Crew Chief. His pride in his service was a major influence in her decision to enter Active Duty. Her two older brothers were also in the military. Charlies 12 year old daughter's dream is to fly B52s ... **AIM HIGH**!!

Charlie is now an entrepreneur and author. She wrote a memoir that lays out her path while "Married to Uncle Sam" It's titled "Love and War" and can be purchased on Amazon or on her website www.Warrior-Unleashed.com. Her next book "As You Were" is a reminder that after trauma and tragedy, you are not "as you were" and it's ok to help others to meet you where you are.

Charlie is a servant at heart. She is involved with "Our Loving Hearts" an organization that caters to seniors, homeless individuals and Youth living in poverty. "Our Loving Hearts" feeds the homeless population in many low-income communities, provide food to senior citizens and does giveaways for the youth during back to school and holidays (https://ourlovingheartsinc.com).

Charlie is excited to relaunch her non-profit organization she established right after leaving the military. "Purpose Unleashed" will provide mentorship to young women.

> *"... her next book "As You Were" is a reminder that after trauma and tragedy, you are not "as you were" and it's ok to help others to meet you where you are."*






WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Keep God first. Be true to yourself and let others experience it."
guard your heart,
for everything

OPERATION SHOWER: BRINGING JOY TO MILI

OPERATION SHOWER

www.operationshower.org

Operation Shower exists for a simple reason: to recognize the military moms and military families who serve our country by providing joyous, awesome group baby showers.



The journey to fulfill this nonprofit's mission started in 2007 with "showers in a box" being put together in the basement of founder LeAnn Morrissey. The showers in a box not only provided amazing must-haves for the moms and their babies, but also let these women and their families know they were not alone.

The support she received for these first showers in a box from individuals and companies, the gratitude of the mothers and the morale boost for the fathers were all LeAnn needed to realize that this was something worth doing again and again. Soon after, Operation Shower hosted its first group baby shower at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. And, since then, they have hosted over **185 group baby showers across the country**!



The group baby showers help bring together expecting mothers who are connected through their military service and provide an opportunity for the honorees to connect with other women who understand their experiences and form supportive bonds.

During the baby showers, the expectant mothers receive numerous gifts for mom and baby donated by individuals and corporations. **These gifts help the families prepare for the arrival of their new baby and create an amazing and joyous experience during what can be a challenging time.** As one mom shared after a recent shower, these showers are lifetime memories:

"Thank you so much for honoring me with this amazing shower. My mother and I truly felt your love and respect. I think I cried the whole time - tears of sadness missing my sailor and tears of joy receiving so many wonderful gifts. This was a once and a lifetime experience and definitely helped this navy Mom get through her first deployment!" - Shower recipient



Operation Shower collaborates with partners, sponsors, and volunteers who contribute their time, resources, and services to make these events possible. Through the collective efforts of the organization and its supporters, Operation Shower has been able to positively impact the lives of over **8,500 military families** across the country.

To learn more, volunteer or donate - please visit www.operationshower.org.

TARY FAMILIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES









BEHIND THE LENS:

It takes a village, or a "squad" in this case to put together a magazine. We bring you a sneak peek of the work in progress. Thank you to everyone that supports our storytelling mission.













*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 the debut 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 above.

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