SHE SERVED MAGAZINE

Celebrating Women Veterans



SHE SERVED ISSUE 14:

UPSTATE WARRIOR SOLUTION #2 EDITION

15 WOMEN VETERANS TELL THEIR STORIES

SPECIAL FEATURES:

SERVICE IS A FAMILY AFFAIR

SERVICE KNOWS NO BORDERS AND NO SINGLE UNIFORM

upstate WARRIOR solution



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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SHE SERVED NEWSLETTER

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INTRODUCING THE SHE SERVED TEAM

The Heart Behind the Mission: Meet the Dedicated Volunteers Behind She Served

A dedicated group of volunteers working behind the scenes to bring each story to life, support every participant, and grow the She Served mission with heart, creativity and purpose. We're always looking for more incredible volunteers to join the team and help us grow the movement. Contact us at info@sheservedinitiative.org



Martina Schmidt
Founder, CEO,
& Photographer



Julie Miller
Co-Founder,
Executive Vice President



Sheryl Binetti
Senior Writer, Veteran
Outreach Coordinator



Ange Keske
Writer &
Copy Editor



Gabby Compton
Copy Editor



Jessica Johnson
Digital Graphic
Designer



Kimberly Mortson
Graphic Designer



Katherine Lorio
Secretary & Social
Media Coordinator



CONNECT WITH US

WEBSITE
www.sheservedinitiative.org

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS
martina@sheservedinitiative.org

FACEBOOK
@SheServedcelebratingwomenveterans

INSTAGRAM
@Sheservedinitiative

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR





We were back in the Upstate of South Carolina and honored to once again partner with **Upstate Warrior Solution** at its Anderson, South Carolina, location for another incredible photoshoot featuring 15 remarkable women.

Every photo shoot reminds us that every woman who serves has a unique story worth telling, and this issue introduces two firsts for the She Served Initiative.

Upstate Warrior Solution's commitment extends beyond Veterans to include our nation's first responders. We are proud to feature one of those extraordinary women in this edition. Be sure to read her story on page 33.

We are also sharing the story of our first woman Veteran from another country. Her journey is a powerful reminder that service knows no borders. Women around the world answer the call to serve their countries in countless ways, united by courage, sacrifice, and dedication. You can find her story on page 20.

These women come from different backgrounds and experiences, yet they all share a common bond and a commitment to something greater than themselves. It is our privilege to preserve and share their stories so that future generations will understand the many faces of service.

As always, we extend heartfelt thanks to Virginia Barnes for inviting us and for her unwavering support of the She Served Initiative. Partnerships like these make it possible to continue honoring the women whose service and sacrifices have too often gone untold.

Thank you for reading, for sharing these stories, and for helping us ensure that the legacy of women who served continues to inspire others.

Julie Miller

IN THIS ISSUE

15 Remarkable Women: Military Service - International Service - Law Enforcement

Different uniforms. Different journeys. **A shared commitment to service.** Meet more women Veterans, explore past editions and help us preserve more stories of service.

Discover stories of service, resilience, friendship and life beyond the uniform through our personal interviews with Veterans that have served in a variety of roles all over the world. They are truly inspiring.

HTTPS://SHESERVEDINITIATIVE.ORG/MAGAZINE/

Service is a family affair:

SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES BEHIND THOSE WHO SERVE

WRITTEN BY JULIE MILLER

For Veterans and first responders, service rarely affects just one person. Behind every deployment, difficult shift, career transition and personal struggle are spouses, children, caregivers and family members whose lives are also shaped by the experience. Upstate Warrior Solution recognizes that reality through its Family Services Program, which is built on the belief that supporting the warrior means supporting the entire family.

At **Upstate Warrior Solution**, known as UWS, the family is considered the cornerstone of healing, growth and long-term success. The Family Services Program connects spouses, caregivers and children with resources, relationships and experiences designed to help them grow, heal and thrive. Its mission is to connect warrior families with resources for healing, guide them through empowerment and growth, and inspire the community to embrace them as valued neighbors and friends.

The approach reflects an understanding that military service and first responder careers create effects that extend far beyond the individual wearing the uniform. "What the Veteran experiences, the whole family also experiences," is a guiding principle behind the program.

Change can be positive or negative, but either way, it affects everyone in the household. When a service member returns from an assignment or deployment, the veteran may not be the same person who left. The family has also changed during that time.

Adjusting to those changes requires strength, patience and support from everyone involved.

UWS works to meet families where they are and walk alongside them as they move forward. Through partnerships and a community-based approach, the organization helps families find connections and resources that can make difficult transitions more manageable. One of the most significant challenges facing warrior families can be mental health.

Undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, can affect relationships and, in some situations, contribute to serious family difficulties, including domestic violence. UWS emphasizes that mental health support is critical not only for Veterans and first responders, but for the entire family.

Through its programs and community partnerships, UWS is committed to supporting the mental well-being of warriors and their loved ones. One example is the SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, a proactive outreach initiative conducted in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The program is designed to identify Veterans who may be at risk, build trust within local communities and connect individuals with mental health and community resources before a crisis occurs.

Early intervention and strong relationships can make a meaningful difference. Families also face challenges that may not always be visible to the public.

Employment can be a significant obstacle for Veterans transitioning into civilian life. Military experience often includes leadership, technical knowledge, problem-solving and specialized training, but civilian employers and human resources professionals may not always understand how those skills translate into available positions.

There can also be misconceptions surrounding PTSD. Some members of the public assume that every Veteran experiences PTSD or that it is permanent and defines the person for the rest of their life. UWS works to challenge those assumptions while helping Veterans and families access the support they need. The Family Services Program also creates opportunities for connection, education and personal growth.

One initiative UWS is especially excited about is Crabby Wayfinders and Wellness. The program emphasizes peer support, self-care, servant leadership and empowerment through education.

Participants gather in a safe, co-ed environment and take part in monthly meetups focused on wellness, nutrition and volunteerism through UWS and community partners.
The goal is not simply to provide services. It is to help people build relationships and develop the confidence and tools needed to move forward.



Throughout the year, UWS offers programs and activities for veterans, first responders and their families. Opportunities include Bravo Explorers, Therapeutic Art, Cornerstone Heroes, Crabby Wayfinders and Wellness, Beauty From Ashes and the Teen Summer Internship program.

Family-centered events also provide opportunities to create memories while strengthening relationships within the warrior community.
Lake Day, Halloween activities at Denver Downs Farm, Operation Thanksgiving Blessings and Operation Christmas Blessings are among the events that bring families together throughout the year. These gatherings offer more than entertainment. They create opportunities for friendship, financial support and community building.

For many families, the relationships formed through these experiences can become an important source of encouragement and understanding.

UWS also recognizes that first responders and their families often face many of the same challenges as military families.
In many ways, there are more similarities than differences. Both Veterans and first responders are willing to serve others and place themselves at risk. The difference, however, is that first responders often "deploy" every day and may encounter traumatic situations repeatedly while returning home to their families after each shift.

Veterans returning from military service may have access to a variety of established resources and support networks. First responders, however, have not always had access to the same level of community support.
UWS is working to help bridge that gap through its Family Services Program and its commitment to serving the broader warrior community.

For one Veteran who later became a first responder, that support has made a personal difference. "UWS provides opportunities for me and my family, like the Greenville Drive baseball games". Even something as simple as a baseball game can make a big difference for a family.

The Veteran/First Responder also pointed out that while veterans and firefighters often receive widespread public appreciation, police officers can sometimes face public criticism and misunderstanding. Upstate Warrior Solution works to change perceptions while providing support to those who continue to serve their communities.

Ultimately, the work of the Family Services Program depends on a larger community of supporters. Local businesses, organizations and individuals can make a difference through financial donations, volunteer time, materials, teen internship opportunities and mentorship.

"The opportunities are never ending," according to the program's mission of community involvement. The greatest message UWS hopes the public will understand is simple: Veterans and first responders do not serve alone. Their families stand beside them through every season of service and transition. Spouses may carry additional responsibilities during deployments or demanding shifts. Children experience the uncertainty and changes that come with a parent's service. Caregivers often provide essential support while navigating challenges of their own.

These families frequently carry the weight of the sacrifices that follow service. Supporting Veterans and first responders, therefore, means recognizing and supporting the people standing beside them. Through resources, relationships, education, family activities and community partnerships, Upstate Warrior Solution is working to ensure that no warrior family has to navigate those challenges alone.

For Veterans, first responders and their loved ones, the path forward is often easier when a community is willing to walk alongside them. More information about Upstate Warrior Solution and its programs is available at upstatewarriorsolution.org and through the organization's Facebook page.

Marlane

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Marlane Babb served in the United States Air Force from August 1994 to March 2025, building a 31-year career. Raised in a family with generations of military service, Marlane felt she would also follow that path. After four years in Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC), she joined the USAF, becoming the first woman in her family to wear the nation's uniform.

Marlane began her military career as an aeromedical evacuation technician, providing medical care to patients aboard military aircraft. She later cross-trained into health services administration, helping keep aeromedical evacuation crews mission ready before becoming a unit training manager responsible for ensuring squadron personnel maintained the training, certifications and qualifications required to accomplish the mission.

Her service included three deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, taking her to Kuwait, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. One memory stands out: Approaching Kuwait, the window shades were lowered, the lights turned off, and the aircraft landed on a darkened runway before everyone ran across the flight line. During that deployment, she entered Mission-Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) Level 4 twenty-eight times. After a week on the ground, she made what she jokingly calls the most expensive phone call of her life from the cockpit of a C-17 to tell her father she was safe.

Military service strengthened Marlane's confidence, resilience and leadership while reinforcing the importance of discipline, teamwork and service.

Today, she serves as operations administrative assistant for the commercial division of Harper General Contracting, supporting project teams and managing documentation.

Marlane has been married to her best friend for 27 years, and together they have two sons. Their older son, Eli, serves on Active Duty in the United States Army and is stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He and his wife, Kennedy, are expecting Marlane's first grandchild. Their younger son, Asher, is a high school junior.

Away from work, Marlane enjoys cross-stitching, crocheting, wood burning, caring for her goat and miniature donkeys while growing in her Christian faith.

Marlane wants the public to recognize that women Veterans have faithfully served in every era of our nation's history as leaders, caregivers, professionals and trailblazers. Their service continues to strengthen their communities.

Her encouragement to women Veterans is to extend themselves grace during the transition to civilian life, seek support when needed, trust the strength they developed through service, and remember they never have to navigate the next chapter alone.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Accept the challenges so that you may experience the exhilaration of victory."
~ George S. Patton





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Soy una berraca."
(Which translates
from Spanish to: "I am
a badass / a strong,
unstoppable woman")

Edna BY JULIE MILLER

Edna Campbell's path to military service was shaped long before she officially raised her right hand. From her early days as a JROTC cadet in Miami to volunteering as a translator for United States Armed Forces missions in Colombia, her commitment to serving others never wavered. That determination eventually led her to the United States Army Reserve, where perseverance became the defining theme of her military career.

Inspired by the humanitarian and military missions she witnessed in Colombia as a translator, including operations supporting local communities, Edna developed a deep respect for the Army's global impact. When she returned to the United States in 2011, she was determined to enlist. Despite several obstacles, she officially enlisted in August 2013 and shipped to basic training in January 2014 at age 32, making her the oldest recruit in her training cycle.

Her journey was anything but easy. A serious injury placed her in medical hold for nine months, delaying her progress but never diminishing her resolve. After recovering, she completed the Army's demanding 44-week Advanced Individual Training as a Biomedical Equipment Specialist, or 68A. Often referred to as a "unicorn MOS" because of its highly specialized nature, the position required her to install, calibrate, maintain and repair sophisticated medical equipment that healthcare professionals depend on to save lives.
Edna considers graduating from the rigorous training program one of her greatest accomplishments. The course compressed the equivalent of a two-year engineering degree into less than a year, requiring mastery of complex analog and digital electronics. Her success prepared her to support military healthcare readiness both in the United States and overseas.

Throughout her service, Edna served with medical units in Rhode Island, Japan and Germany. She later worked at the Pentagon, contributing to military medical readiness at the highest levels. While she did not deploy to a combat zone, she believes every role is essential to mission success.

Today, Edna is completing her bachelor's degree in social work and plans to earn a master's degree in social work before commissioning as a military social worker. She is also a passionate advocate for Veterans struggling with substance abuse, inspired by her family's personal experiences navigating addiction and recovery.
Living in Greenville, South Carolina, with her husband, Ken, their son, Rubler, and stepdaughter, Mariska, Edna remains dedicated to serving others. Her message to fellow women Veterans is simple: Never give up, advocate for yourself and remember that no one has to face life's challenges alone.





Peggy

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Encouraged by her grandmother, **Peggy Chitwood** joined the United States Air Force, following the example set by her father, grandfather and uncles. Her military service spanned October 1972 to January 1982 before continuing in the Air Force Reserve until January 1993.
Peggy began as a medical laboratory technician, performing tests in several specialties. She found special hematology meaningful, working with cancer patients. Later, she transitioned into chapel management, coordinating ministry programs and managing the chapel's administrative and financial operations.

While stationed at Keesler Air Force Base, Peggy also participated in the honor guard for military funerals and worked in the base coffee house for young Airmen. After transferring to Aviano Air Base in Italy, Peggy continued her work in chapel management and served on the USAFE Chapel Managers Advisory Council. During wartime readiness exercises, she carried messages in chemical gear to the backup bunker. She later served in the Tactical Air Command Chaplain's Office at Langley Air Force Base, coordinating family retreats nationwide while supporting Air Force chaplain ministries.

Military service strengthened Peggy's belief that supporting military members and their families was one of the greatest ways to honor God. During technical school, Peggy witnessed the home coming for prisoners of war returning from Vietnam and that experience remains with her to this day. She learned that pride comes from giving your best while working hard.

While stationed at Aviano Air Base, Peggy met her husband. They built their family of five with sons Tony, Charles and Justin. Today, two of their sons continue the family's legacy of military service.
After the Air Force, Peggy completed her college degree. She then devoted 17 years to ministry in the United Methodist Church. During that time, she served nine years as a director of program ministries and eight years as a lay pastor. She ministered to women in a rehabilitation facility, a role she found especially gratifying. Today, she continues serving others through volunteer work. She also enjoys spending time with her family, including her beloved dogs, Boots and Daisy.

Peggy hopes the public will never assume a woman wearing military apparel is representing someone else's service. Instead, she encourages people to simply say, "Thank you for your service."

Her advice to fellow women Veterans is to ask for help and do their homework on the resources available to them.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Do all the good you can,
by all the means you can,
in all the ways you can, in
all the places you can, at
all the times you can, to
all the people you can, as
long as ever you can."
~ John Wesley

WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Life is too short to be anything but happy."
~ José N. Harris



Emily

BY JULIE MILLER

For **Emily DaBruzzi**, joining the United States Navy was about more than adventure. It was an opportunity to see the world, serve her country and challenge herself in ways she never imagined. That decision led to a decade of distinguished service and a lifelong commitment to supporting the military community.

Emily served in the U.S. Navy from Feb. 13, 2001, to June 1, 2011, as a Korean linguist. Stationed primarily at Kuni, Hawaii, she provided highly specialized translation and linguistic support for the National Security Agency, earning the Department of Defense's highest possible score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test. Mastering the Korean language remains one of her proudest accomplishments.

Throughout her career, Emily balanced technical expertise with exceptional leadership. She supervised more than 220 sailors, managed a military watch program serving 1,800 personnel with zero discrepancies and coordinated executive-level operations for senior military leaders and foreign dignitaries. Later, she was selected to lead her command's Aloha Division, helping incoming sailors transition successfully into their new assignments.

Her service supported Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. While assigned to Navy Information Operations Command Hawaii, Emily deployed aboard Seventh Fleet ships as a Korean translator, providing critical language expertise during sensitive national security missions. Her contributions earned numerous military honors, including the Navy Commendation Medal, two Joint Service Achievement Medals, two Navy Achievement Medals and three Good Conduct Medals. In 2009, she was recognized as NIOC Hawaii Senior Sailor of the Year and NSA Hawaii Leader/Manager of the Year.

Today, Emily serves as director of Military & Veteran Engagement at Clemson University, where she leads initiatives supporting more than 3,200 military-connected students. Beyond Clemson, Emily serves in leadership and advisory roles with numerous military-serving organizations and initiatives.

A mother of three boys, Emily proudly describes herself as a "triple threat" — Navy Veteran, Navy spouse and Navy mom. She remains deeply involved with organizations serving Veterans throughout South Carolina while advocating for greater recognition of women who have served.

To the public, Emily says, "Women Veterans are often overlooked as Veterans. It's usually not intentional, but it stings. Women Veterans come from every background and profession, and their service deserves to be seen, recognized and celebrated."

To other women Veterans she says, "Your leadership, likely derived from your military service, matters in the places and spaces you are in. Keep being authentically you."





Haley

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Inspired by hearing about soldiers protecting the United States after the September 11 attacks, **Haley Dunkin** wrote in second grade that she wanted to become a soldier. Like many children, her career dreams changed over the years, but seeing a military recruiter in her high school cafeteria brought that childhood dream back into focus. Haley served in the United States Army from Aug. 14, 2012, to Jan. 15, 2015.

One of the defining experiences of Haley's military service was her selection to a Female Engagement Team. Working alongside infantry units, she engaged with Afghan women and children in communities where cultural norms often limited access for male soldiers. Haley built trust, gathered information, supported local communities, and strengthened relationships between coalition forces and the communities they served.

Haley's deployment supported coalition efforts during the drawdown and closure of enemy strongholds and installations, helping advance the mission. She earned several military decorations, including the Army Commendation Medal and Combat Action Badge, recognizing her service during Operation Enduring Freedom.

A vehicle rollover near the end of her deployment ended her military career. Although that chapter was difficult, it taught her resilience, perseverance and the importance of continuing to serve others beyond the uniform.

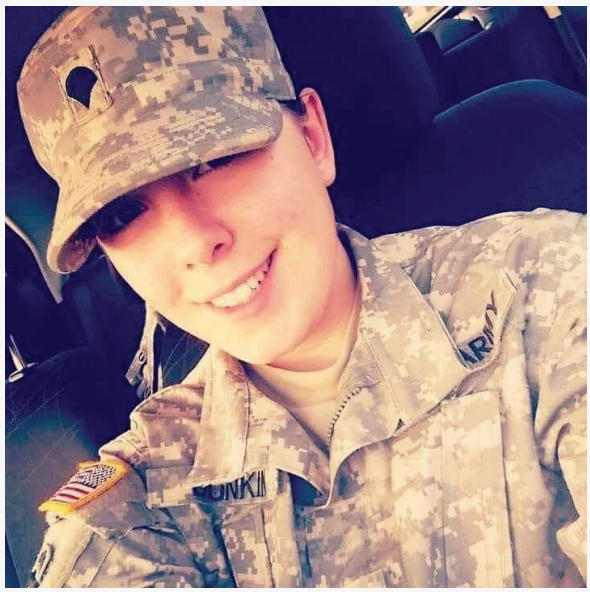
Over time, Haley realized she wasn't drawn to the uniform itself, but to helping people and being part of something bigger than herself. The mission simply changed.

Today, Haley lives in South Carolina with her husband, Mitch, who is also an Army Veteran, and their daughter, Rory. As Grassroots Engagement Director for Americans for Prosperity and Concerned Veterans for America, she helps people find their voices, build relationships and become engaged in issues affecting their communities. She also volunteers with organizations supporting Veterans, first responders, families and children in need.

Haley hopes the public recognizes that women Veterans have always served with courage, leadership and sacrifice, even when their contributions have gone unseen. She wants young girls to know they belong wherever courage, leadership and service are needed.

She encourages fellow women Veterans to embrace life's unexpected turns, remembering that purpose does not end when plans change. Every experience can help someone else, and by investing in people, building relationships, and continuing to serve their communities, women Veterans can leave a lasting impact long after the uniform comes off.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Whoever told you
my story was over
was sadly mistaken."
~ Unknown



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"A woman is like a
tea bag—you can't tell how
strong she is until
you put her in hot water."
~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Erica

BY JULIE MILLER

Wanting to leave her hometown while answering a call to serve her country, **Erica Hatfield** enlisted in the United States Navy and served from 2010 to 2014. Over the next four years, she built a career that combined technical expertise, teamwork and dedication, serving as an aviation electronics technician second class (AT2).

As an avionics technician assigned to E-2C Hawkeye aircraft, Erica maintained the radar and communication systems that were essential to mission success. Stationed at Point Mugu, California, and later deployed aboard the USS Nimitz in 2013, she ensured the aircraft remained operational by troubleshooting and repairing sophisticated electronic equipment. Her responsibilities also included testing aircraft identification codes on the flight deck, overseeing radio upgrades and numerous other duties. Her work demanded precision, attention to detail and a commitment to keeping flight operations safe and mission ready.

During deployment, Erica supported Operation Enduring Freedom while operating in a region experiencing heightened international tensions. Her carrier strike group responded following the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against its own citizens and participated in a tense standoff with a Russian warship in the Red Sea. These experiences underscored the unpredictable nature of military service and reinforced the importance of readiness and professionalism.

When reflecting on her time in uniform, Erica says the camaraderie she shared with fellow sailors and the opportunity to travel the world remain the most meaningful parts of her service. The friendships she forged continue to shape her life today.

Following her military career, Erica found a new way to serve others as an early childhood intervention specialist. She works closely with families of children with special needs, helping them access resources and developmental support during some of the most important years of a child's life.

Outside of work, Erica enjoys crocheting, baking, hiking, reading and making jewelry. She stays connected to her family, also in South Carolina, with her parents living in Anderson, and her sister in Greer. She also enjoys the companionship of her four beloved cats.

Erica hopes people recognize that women Veterans often blend into everyday life, even though they served alongside men in the same demanding roles. Her advice to women transitioning from military to civilian life is simple: "You can do or be anything you put your mind to," she says. "You are never alone. Reach out and use the resources that are there for you."





Miki

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Growing up in Israel, **Miki Karni** was ready for the responsibility to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Proud to serve her country, she joined the IDF Communications Corps from 1985 to 1986, serving with Battalion 414 along the Israel-Jordan border.

Following four months of specialized training, Miki became the commander of an eight-woman ground surveillance radar team responsible for monitoring border activity during overnight operations. Using radar technology, her team detected suspicious movement and coordinated with security forces to investigate potential infiltrations. Under her leadership, the radar position achieved four successful interceptions, earning recognition from senior commanders. Although Israel and Jordan were not at war during her service, the constant threat of illegal border crossings demanded vigilance, sound judgment, and unwavering responsibility.

Military service taught Miki to lead under pressure, make decisions that carried responsibility for human life, trust her training and appreciate the value of teamwork. Just as meaningful were the lifelong friendships she formed, relationships that have remained strong for more than 40 years.

After living in Israel for 50 years, Miki began a new chapter when she immigrated to the United States following her second marriage. Now a proud American citizen living in South Carolina, she and her husband, Mati, have built a blended family of eight children.

The same commitment to protecting and serving others that defined her military service continues to shape her work today. As the founding director of Jewish Family Services of the Upstate, Miki became the first social worker to establish the program from the ground up.

Through volunteer programs, community partnerships, and outreach initiatives, she connects both Jewish and non-Jewish residents with resources, companionship, emotional support, and a welcoming sense of community. Following Hurricane Helene, she assisted with disaster recovery efforts. She also volunteers with Project Host and partners with Soldiers Songs and Voices, a Veterans organization that uses music to promote healing from post-traumatic stress disorder.

A lifetime of service has reinforced Miki's belief that women Veterans possess extraordinary strength, leadership, and limitless potential. She hopes the public understands the invaluable contributions women have made through military service and beyond. To fellow women Veterans, she offers this encouragement: Never forget who you are. You have already proven, most importantly to yourself, that you are capable. Stay true to your values, trust the strength you've built, and always remember, you can do it.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"The more I give to others, the more meaningful and rich my life becomes."





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Be strong and
courageous."
~ Joshua 1:9

Victoria

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Victoria Kuronya believes that service is about answering a calling greater than yourself. That desire for purpose, discipline and the influence of her grandfather and great-grandfather, led her to join the United States Air Force in 2006. She was searching for a way to challenge herself while serving her country, and during the next five years, she found much more than a career. She discovered lifelong friendships, a deep sense of resilience, and values that continue to guide her long after hanging up the uniform.



Serving as a dental assistant, Victoria played an essential role in maintaining the health and readiness of active-duty service members. Working alongside military dentists and specialists, she provided preventive, restorative and surgical dental care while ensuring strict infection control standards and educating patients about their oral health. Although her work often took place behind the scenes, she understood that mission readiness depends on every member doing their job with excellence. Caring for fellow service members and helping prepare them for whatever mission lay ahead became one of the accomplishments she treasures most.

During her service from 2006 to 2011, Victoria supported the Global War on Terror by helping ensure military personnel remained healthy and ready to deploy. While she was not deployed to a combat zone herself, she takes pride in knowing her work directly supported those who were. Her experience reinforced an important lesson: every role matters, and consistent excellence in daily service is just as valuable as public recognition.



The USAF also shaped the person she would become. It taught her that true strength is found in integrity, perseverance and putting others before yourself. Those lessons continue to influence every aspect of her life, from leadership to motherhood and faith.

Today, Victoria is devoted to her greatest mission—her family. She and her husband are raising two sons, and together they strive to build a home centered on faith, love, resilience and service. She is also pursuing her passion by building Faith & Fire Fitness, a Christian fitness ministry that combines movement, worship and encouragement to help women grow physically and spiritually. In addition, she advocates for Veterans and promotes mental health awareness while serving through her church by welcoming guests, praying with others and supporting community outreach.

Victoria hopes the public recognizes that women Veterans have always served with courage, sacrifice and dedication. Their stories deserve to be heard, their contributions celebrated, and their legacy preserved for future generations.

Service Knows No Borders and No Single Uniform

WRITTEN BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

At the She Served Initiative, our mission has always been to preserve the stories of women who have dedicated themselves to serving others. While our primary focus remains on American women veterans, we also strive to educate the public about the many faces of service. This edition reflects that broader mission and the work of Upstate Warrior Solutions, whose commitment extends beyond supporting veterans to also serving first responders, including law enforcement officers. In recognition of that shared commitment, this edition marks two important milestones as we feature, for the first time, both a veteran of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and a female law enforcement officer. We invite you to read the inspiring stories of our first featured law enforcement officer, Chloé Nabors on page 34, and our IDF Veteran, Miki Karni on page 20.

These stories represent more than two remarkable women, they reflect the broader truth that service takes many forms. Whether in military uniform or a law enforcement badge, service is defined by the commitment to protect others, the willingness to sacrifice, and the courage to answer a calling greater than oneself.



Our featured IDF veteran reminds us that military service is a shared experience among our allies. Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, women have served in the Israel Defense Forces as part of the nation's mandatory military service. Today, women make up approximately one-third of the IDF's active-duty personnel, serving in roles ranging from intelligence and medicine to aviation, engineering, and combat units. Like American women veterans, they have spent decades breaking barriers and proving that leadership, resilience, and courage know no gender.

We also proudly introduce our first feature on a woman who has served her country through law enforcement. While policing differs from military service, it is another profession built on duty, sacrifice, and protecting others. Women have served in American law enforcement for more than a century, beginning with Alice Stebbins Wells, who became the nation's first female police officer with full arrest powers in 1910. Today, women represent approximately 13–14% of sworn law enforcement officers in the United States. Although they remain underrepresented, they continue to make significant contributions in patrol, investigations, specialized units, and leadership positions.

WOMEN in Policing

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS WITH A SHARED COMMITMENT TO SERVE



1891

Marie Owens becomes one of the earliest known female police officers in the United States



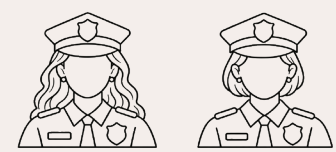
1910

***Alice Stebbins Wells** joins the Los Angeles Police Department with full police powers



1919

Georgia Ann Robinson becomes the first Black female police officer in the United States



1968

Betty Blankenship and Elizabeth Robinson become the first women assigned to regular patrol duties



1985

Women begin reaching top ranks, including the first female chief (**Penny Harrington**) of a major United States police Department



Today: Women serve in all areas of law enforcement - from patrol and investigations to specialized units and leadership roles.

** Alice Stebbins Wells, appointed to the Los Angeles Police Department in 1910. Historical photograph, public domain.*

For many military veterans, the transition into law enforcement is a continuation of their commitment to public service. Others choose policing as their own path to serving their communities. Whether in military fatigues or a police uniform, these women share common values—integrity, discipline, courage, and a deep commitment to protecting others.

As the She Served Initiative continues to grow, we believe it is important to preserve not only the stories of American women veterans but also those of women whose lives have been defined by service in its many forms. By sharing the experiences of women from allied military forces and public service professions, we provide a broader understanding of the sacrifices women make and the vital roles they play in strengthening our communities and our world. Because at the heart of every story we tell is the same enduring truth:

Service is not defined by a single uniform or a single nation. It is defined by the character, courage, and selfless commitment of the women who choose to serve.



***Alice Stebbins Wells** made history in 1910 when she joined the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), becoming one of the first women in the United States to serve as a police officer with full arrest powers.*

"It is now conceded by nearly all reasonable people that there is a type of police work which cannot and should not be done by men." — Alice Stebbins Wells

She continued by arguing that without policewomen, cities left "a vast amount of preventive police work" involving women and children undone. This comes from her paper "*The Policewomen Movement: Present Status and Future Needs,*" presented while she was president of the International Association of Policewomen. Shortly after she joined the LAPD she said, "I intend to use my place for the good of the coming generation. The more we study the problem of crime in the community, the more we are coming to realize the importance of preventive rather than punitive measures." (1910 Historical Snapshots)

Allison BY SHERYL BINETTI

Accepted to the United States Military Academy at West Point as a Division I softball player, **Allison LoPresti** discovered an opportunity to combine athletic competition with a commitment to serve her country. She graduated from West Point in 1994 and remained on active duty in the United States Army until 2000. Allison then served another three years in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Prior to being stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany, Allison completed airborne and rigger training and ultimately earned her Australian Jump Wings. Assigned as a quartermaster and logistics officer, she helped ensure soldiers had the equipment, supplies and support needed to accomplish their missions. While there, she deployed in support of Operation Joint Endeavor in Hungary and Bosnia. She later completed advanced training as a captain and assumed command at Fort Lee, Virginia. The camaraderie and selflessness she experienced among fellow soldiers became one of the most meaningful lessons of her military years and continues to influence how she supports fellow Veterans today.

The day after graduating from West Point, Allison married fellow graduate Thomas LoPresti. Together they balanced the demands of military service while raising a family. Their first son was born while they were stationed in Germany, and their second arrived during her captain's career course. After leaving the military, the couple settled in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Today, Allison is a district manager for Medtronic, where she draws on the leadership and teamwork she developed during military service. She also served as chair of Women's Professional Development and co-chair of the company's Veterans Employee Resource Group, helping advance, and inspire women and Veterans while fostering an inclusive workplace where all employees can thrive. She and her husband also own Saluda River Farms in Greenville, South Carolina, where they have hosted retreats that brought together 20 women Veterans for connection, reflection and support. They continue creating opportunities for women Veterans to build community and encourage one another.

Allison wants the public to recognize the value women Veterans bring to the workplace. Their leadership, resilience and unique experiences make them tremendous assets in the private sector.

To fellow women Veterans, Allison offers this advice: The leadership and skills developed during military service have lasting value. Reach out to resources in your community that can help translate those strengths into civilian opportunities. Your experiences are unique, your perspective matters, and you have what it takes to succeed.







WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

~ Maya Angelou



WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Be proud of what
you do for others."

Judith BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

When **Judith McClain** was deciding what to do after college, she mentioned to her parents that she might join the military. Her father, who had served in the United States Army during World War II before joining the North Carolina National Guard, didn't hesitate. "Go in the Air Force," he told her. Judith followed his advice, beginning a United States Air Force career in March 1967 that would shape the rest of her life.

Serving until November 1975, Judith worked as an inventory management specialist. Her job was to ensure military equipment, including weapons and vehicles, was properly accounted for and that replacement equipment was available when items were damaged or worn out. It was work that required precision, organization and accountability.

During the Vietnam era, Judith was stationed at Korat Air Base, Thailand, supporting military operations from overseas. Although her role was behind the scenes, she understood that every mission depended on having the right equipment in the right place. The Air Force also taught her lessons that remained long after her service ended: stay organized, be accountable and always do your part.

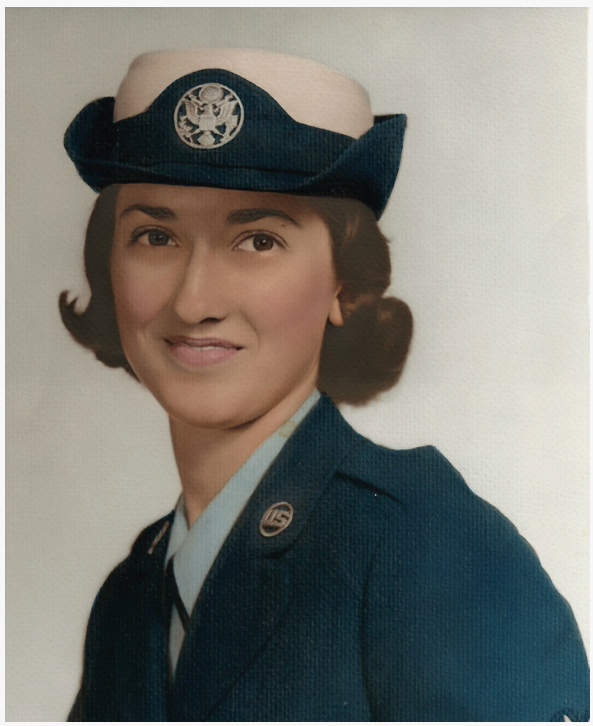
The military also introduced Judith to her husband. They met while stationed at Charleston Air Force Base and later served at different bases in Thailand before spending four years together in northern Italy. Together they built a loving family, adopting a son with autism and heart health challenges, and a daughter who is now the mother of Judith's three grandchildren. Their family has also grown to include a great-grandson.

After leaving the Air Force, Judith spent 20 years as a school bus driver for Anderson County School District 2. Today, she continues serving others by driving Veterans to medical appointments through the Anderson County Veterans Office.

Service remains a way of life for Judith. She volunteers with Meals on Wheels, serves as an officer with American Legion Post 50, participates in military funeral honors as an Honor Guard, is active in her church and regularly attends Vets Helping Vets of Anderson. When she's not volunteering, she enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandson and believes in helping wherever she is needed.

Judith hopes the public recognizes that women Veterans are volunteers who chose to serve their country. Her advice to fellow women Veterans is simple: "Ask for help. No one can do everything alone."





Shameka

BY SHERYL BINETTI

Shameka McClung enlisted in the United States Army on May 21, 1998, two days after graduating from high school. Hoping to ease the financial burden on her parents, she expected to serve one enlistment before using her education benefits to attend college. Instead, she remained in uniform until retiring on Sept. 1, 2018.

A significant experience during Shameka's military career was serving as a drill sergeant. She trained more than 600 recruits over 10 basic combat training cycles. In the process, she discovered she couldn't lead soldiers well until she learned to lead herself.

As a human resources specialist, Shameka served in a variety of personnel assignments that included support for NATO Operation Joint Guardian with the United States Kosovo Force and Operation Enduring Freedom. After years of processing awards for others, she never expected to receive the Meritorious Service Medal herself. The honor carried special significance because her noncommissioned officer in charge saw something in her and fought to ensure she received the recognition.

Retiring from the Army brought unexpected challenges. Shameka struggled with the transition to civilian life and did not work for five years. She eventually moved to Greenville, South Carolina, where she began working as a guest relations associate at the Rupert Huse Veteran Center with Upstate Warrior Solutions.

Shameka is now completing massage therapy school, realizing a goal she had held for seven years. She describes this next chapter as "trading one uniform for another." Her long-term vision is to open a wellness center where she can help others through massage therapy, wellness coaching, fitness classes and women's retreats.

The Upstate South Carolina Women Veterans Group, Operation Christmas Blessing, the annual Palmetto Heroes Hike and Guitars Helping Vets are among the organizations Shameka supports. Her family continues to be a constant source of support, traveling to be with her throughout her military assignments and subsequent moves.

One message Shameka hopes to share with the public is that women Veterans made the same sacrifices as their male counterparts and deserve to be seen and recognized for their service. She encourages fellow women Veterans to give themselves grace during the transition to civilian life. Their journey doesn't have to look like anyone else's.





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Don't be afraid of your power. YES, that's you!"
~ Shameka





WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"Be her. Be the woman who knows the grass is greener wherever she stands, because she brings value to every space she enters."

~ Unknown

Chloé BY SHERYL BINETTI

For **Chloé Nabors**, a career in law enforcement began with a realization that she was meant to serve her community in a different way. While working in emergency medical services, she often watched law enforcement officers respond to difficult situations. Seeing them at work sparked something in her. She felt drawn to the profession and knew it offered the sense of purpose and service she was looking for.

In November 2020, Chloé began working as a law enforcement officer on road patrol, a role she continued until October 2025. Her responsibilities placed her directly in the community, where every day and every call could bring something different. While traffic stops occasionally provided lighter moments, some of the most meaningful parts of her career came through opportunities to make a difference in people's lives.

She became particularly passionate about de-escalating difficult situations, positively influencing young people and encouraging individuals struggling with addiction. Rather than seeing only the circumstances that brought someone into contact with law enforcement, she learned to see the person behind them. Supporting people as they worked toward recovery became an especially meaningful part of her service.

Those experiences also changed her. Law enforcement, she says, opened her eyes to new perspectives and strengthened her emotional intelligence, allowing her to better understand and serve the people around her.

Today, Chloé has traded road patrol for a very different life of service. She is married to an infantry Veteran she describes as the love of her life, and together they have five children. The couple even designed the floor plan for their future home on their third date. She now has the opportunity to stay home with their children while building a career as a wedding and lifestyle photographer.

Her love of people remains at the heart of her work. She builds relationships with couples throughout their engagements so she can understand and serve them well on their wedding day. She also offers significant discounts to military and law enforcement clients.

Community remains deeply important to her. She supports The Hiding Place, an organization serving domestic violence survivors and providing a safe place for those escaping abuse.

Whether wearing a badge, raising her family or standing behind a camera, Chloé continues to find purpose in connecting with and serving others.





Tina

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

From the time she was 12 years old, **Tina Ruffner** knew she wanted to serve her country. Military service was a tradition in her family. Inspired by her grandfather's Navy service and three great uncles who served in both the Navy and Army, Tina dreamed of wearing a uniform. Although she first imagined joining the United States Navy, meeting a cousin in the United States Marine Corps changed everything. She knew then that she was destined to become a Marine.

After enlisting in 1991, Tina completed boot camp and supply administration training before receiving orders to the 3rd Supply Battalion,Okinawa, Japan. At just 19 years old and holding the rank of E-2, she was entrusted with managing a $10 million inventory account, a responsibility normally assigned to a staff sergeant. Her outstanding performance earned her a letter of commendation and taught her the importance of accountability and earning trust.

Returning stateside, Tina served with the 2nd Supply Battalion at Camp Lejeune before moving into the G-4 Materiel Support Branch, where she supported command leadership. Later, while assigned to Quantico, she worked in War-gaming, earned a Top Secret security clearance, and received another Letter of Commendation. Although she did not deploy to combat, she proudly served during the Gulf War era and received the National Defense Service Medal. Looking back, Tina says her greatest accomplishment was the trust leaders placed in her throughout her career and the increasing responsibilities she was given.

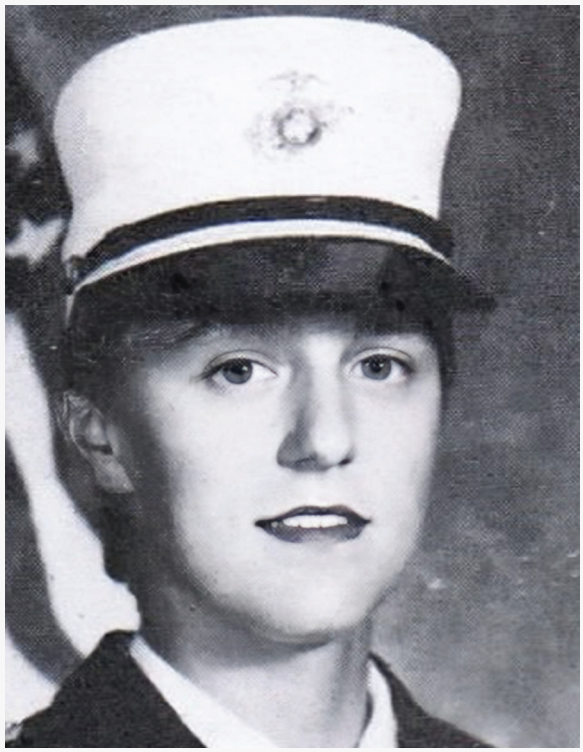
Today, Tina is a project manager for an IT consulting firm, where she coordinates complex projects and ensures successful implementation for her clients. She is also the owner of Bravo Bella Art Studio, creating commissioned artwork, hosting paint-and-sip events, and teaching resin art workshops for Veterans through Upstate Warrior Solutions. Tina is engaged to a fellow USMC Veteran and is the proud mother of two adult children, whom she describes as "the very best parts of me." She also enjoys traveling, hiking, kayaking, creating art and exploring the outdoors with her two adventurous Chihuahuas.

She hopes the public recognizes that women Veterans are often the invisible thread of the military community. They continue serving long after taking off the uniform as mothers, business owners, artists, mentors and advocates. "We are not an afterthought to the Veteran story," Tina says. "We are the story, too."

For women transitioning into civilian life, Tina offers simple but meaningful advice: "Give yourself some grace. It takes time to adjust."

She encourages women Veterans to find their community, stay connected and remember that the discipline, resilience and leadership they developed in uniform will continue to guide them long after their military service ends.





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





WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Hold your head
up high. Be strong
and proud."

Luzia

BY JULIE MILLER

Luzia Trexler knew while she was still in high school that she wanted to serve in the military. Her inspiration came from her father, who served in the Army during World War II. Life took her in a different direction for a time, and she met her future husband. After two years of marriage, the couple decided to enlist in the U.S. Army and begin their military journey together.

Luzia served in the Army from 1981 to 1987, beginning her career as a 26T Radio and TV Systems Specialist. When that military occupational specialty was transferred to civilian contract positions, she was assigned to the testing center for basic trainees at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Determined to continue advancing her military career, Luzia later earned a commission in the Army Signal Corps. In 1984, she was assigned to the 141st Signal Battalion, 1st Armored Division, in Ansbach, Bavaria, Germany, where she served as a tactical platoon leader. She later became the battalion staff signal officer with the 501st in Katterbach, Germany.

Luzia and her husband made military history of their own when they became the first married couple to attend Officer Candidate School at the same time. They were determined to graduate in the same training cycle, hoping to improve their chances of being stationed together. Luzia was one of only three women to graduate in that cycle. Their plan paid off, and the couple was stationed together in Ansbach, Germany.

During her service, Luzia participated in two REFORGER missions in Germany. The exercises, designed to demonstrate NATO's ability to rapidly reinforce Europe, provided valuable experience in supporting military readiness and cooperation among allied forces. The lessons Luzia carried from her military service continue to guide her. "Commitment, dedication and faithfulness will always serve you well," she said.

Luzia and her husband had two children before he passed away in 2007. Today, she works as an in-home caregiver for senior citizens and is preparing to begin a new chapter in her life after recently becoming engaged to a Vietnam-era Army Veteran.

Faith and service remain important parts of Luzia's life. She shares her Lutheran faith with others, volunteers through her church and supports Upstate Warrior Solution. For Luzia, serving her country was more than a career. She would like civilians to know that women are extremely proud to have served their nation. "It was and is," she said, "a very great honor."





Diandra

BY MARTINA SCHMIDT

Three things inspired **Diandra Whitfield** to join the United States Marine Corps: education, adventure and a challenge. Although she had earned college acceptance letters and scholarships, she knew they would not cover everything she needed to achieve her goals. The Marine Corps offered her the opportunity to earn an education without taking on overwhelming debt, while also allowing her to travel the world, experience different cultures and push herself beyond her limits.

Over the next 20 years, from 2006 to 2026, Diandra built a distinguished career as an aviation supply logistics specialist. While many people never see the work behind military aviation, she played a vital role in keeping Marine aircraft mission ready by managing the inventory, finances and accountability of critical aircraft parts. Her expertise eventually led her to write Marine Corps policies that established standards across the fleet. As an aviation auditor, she ensured financial accountability, trained Marines, and enforced the strict policies that keep aviation operations running safely and effectively. She also served as a stress management and behavioral health instructor and helped fellow Marines pursue higher education as an education officer.

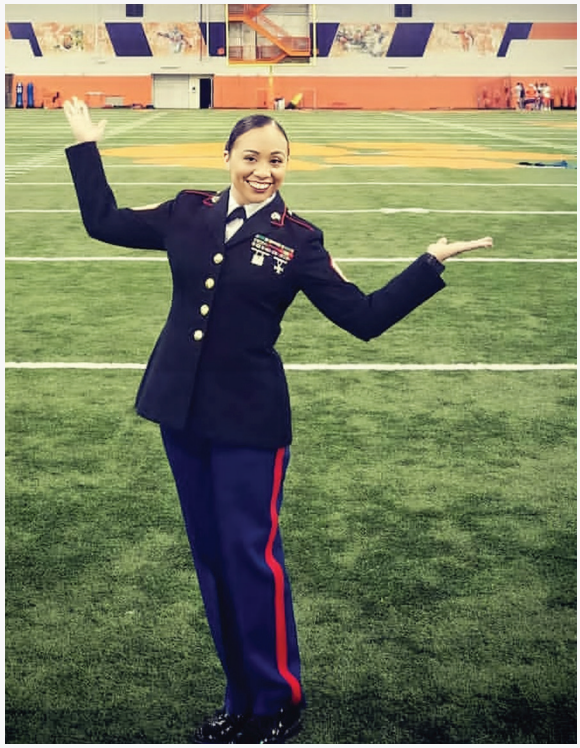
During her career, Diandra deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2008 with MALS-16 Forward, serving at Al Taqaddum Air Base and participating in the original Lioness Program. Although the women who served in the program received little recognition at the time, they quietly opened doors for those who followed. Later, while stationed in Japan, she supported humanitarian relief efforts following the devastating earthquake and tsunami, earning the Humanitarian Service Award.

Despite these accomplishments, Diandra says the greatest reward of her military career has been watching the Marines she mentored grow into successful leaders. Their success remains her proudest legacy.
Today, Diandra is enjoying retirement from the Marine Corps while embracing being fully present as a mother. She is raising her two teenage sons while continuing to serve fellow Veterans through an internship with Upstate Warrior Solution.

When she is not helping others, Diandra enjoys traveling; exploring new cultures and cuisines; reading on the beach; snorkeling; scuba diving; and Latin dancing.

Having served as a Marine Corps recruiter, she experienced firsthand the misconceptions many women Veterans still face. Her message is simple: women are fully capable of building successful military careers while raising strong families. With the support of a trusted community, women can create lasting opportunities for themselves and for the next generation.

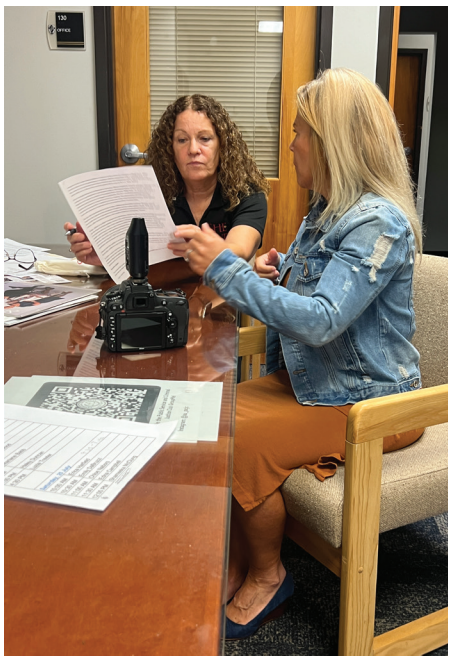




WORDS TO LIVE BY:
"Well behaved women rarely make history."
~ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich



BEHIND THE SCENES: Upstate Warrior Solution Edition













SAY CHEESE







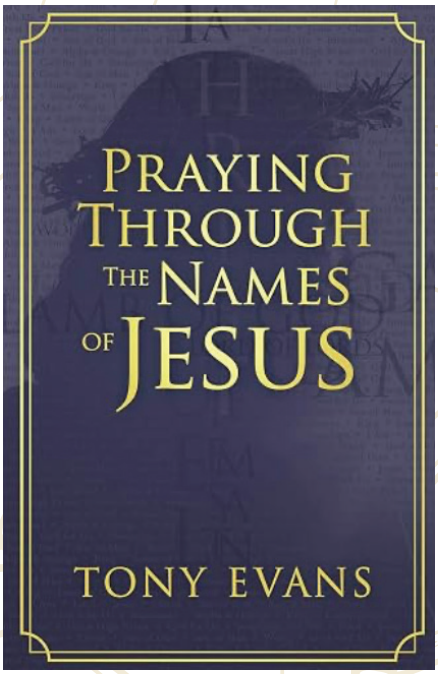




Recommended reading

At the **She Served Initiative**, we believe that reading is an opportunity to learn, reflect, and better understand perspectives beyond our own. The books featured in our Recommended Reading section are suggested by the veterans whose stories appear in this magazine. Their recommendations reflect their individual interests, experiences, and points of view. Not every book will resonate with every reader. Some may explore political, cultural, historical, or religious perspectives that differ from your own, and we believe there is value in being open to thoughtful viewpoints and ideas. Books are included for educational and informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the She Served Initiative or its team members. We welcome recommendations from our featured veterans as long as the material contributes to learning and respectful dialogue and does not promote hatred or demean others.

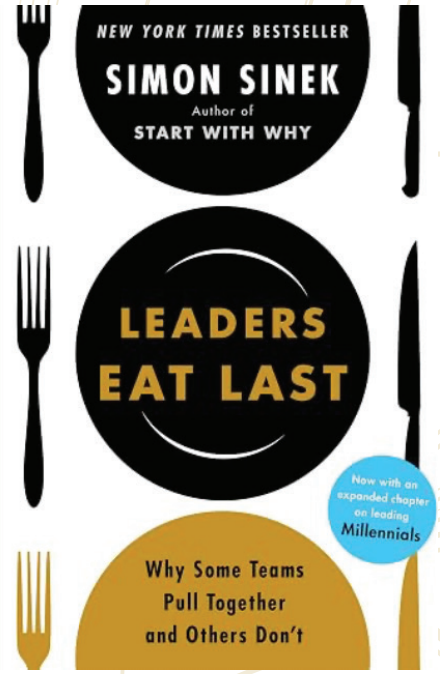
We encourage you to read with curiosity, think critically, and remain open to different perspectives.



Praying Through the Names of Jesus by Tony Evans

Recommended by Edna Campbell on page 10

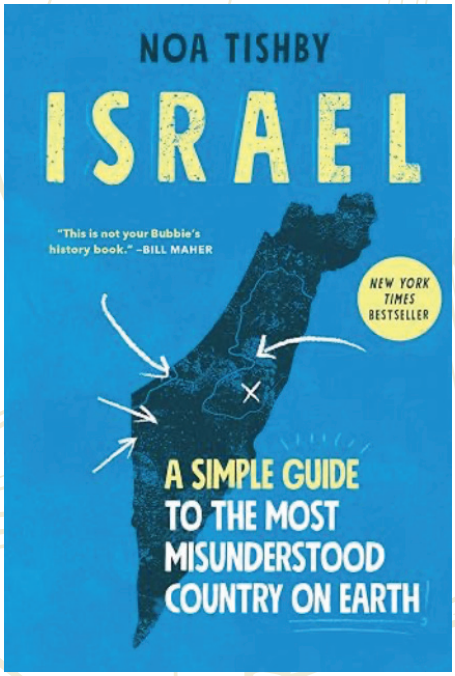
Dr. Tony Evans serves as your guide as you learn what it means to call on all of Jesus' names. As you get to know the significance and power of His many names in Scripture and what they reveal about His character, you will experience an even closer relationship with the Savior.



Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't by Simon Sinek

Recommended by Diandra Whitfield on page 38

Bestselling author Simon Sinek explores what makes strong teams thrive. Drawing on examples from the military, business, and organizations around the world, Sinek argues that effective leadership is built on trust, cooperation, and putting the well-being of others first. The book challenges leaders to create a "Circle of Safety"—an environment where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to work together toward a common purpose.



Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth by Noa Tishby

Recommended by Miki Karni, Israeli Defense Forces Veteran on page 20

From Miki: It's a very accessible, engaging introduction to Israel's history, Zionism, culture, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, written in a personal and conversational style. Tishby takes a clearly pro-Israel/Zionist perspective, so I would not present it as a completely neutral history book. But that is also part of its value: she explains many of the arguments and historical context that are often missing from mainstream discussions of Israel. It is especially good for someone who wants a relatively quick, readable foundation for understanding Israel and the debates surrounding it.

Host a *She Served* Veteran photo shoot

INTERESTED IN HOSTING A SHE SERVED EVENT?
Bring a powerful, one-of-a-kind experience to your community by honoring women Veterans through storytelling and portraiture. A She Served photoshoot is more than a session—it's a meaningful tribute that captures service, strength and legacy. If you're looking to host something memorable, impactful and deeply personal, this is a special opportunity to make it happen.

GET STARTED
Visit: **https://sheservedinitiative.org/**

PHOTOSHOOT EXPERIENCE
Exclusively for women Veterans, each participant receives a 30-minute professional photoshoot and is encouraged to bring personal props or mementos that reflect their story.

WHAT TO EXPECT AS A HOST
Participating Veterans will complete a brief intake form, share a short biography of their military and post-military life and provide a clear photo in uniform (official service photo preferred). With advance scheduling, about 10 Veterans can be accommodated per day during the photography session.

EXPENSES
There is no cost for Veterans or hosts to participate. Hosts are asked to assist with travel and hospitality, including lodging, airfare and/or mileage reimbursement and meals.

LEARN MORE AND CONNECT
Visit **https://sheservedinitiative.org/hosting/** for full details and to become a host.







VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
Explore the She Served image galleries, purchase current and past issues of the magazine and shop exclusive merchandise — including apparel, travel mugs and water bottles.

Discover more at:
https://sheservedinitiative.org

SCAN TO DONATE

*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.