

FUTURES

LIVE *Fulfilled*



INSIDE:

LOOKING OUT
FOR OTHERS

BEYOND THE
UNIFORM

EDUCATION
FOR EVERYONE

YOUR FUTURE STARTS HERE

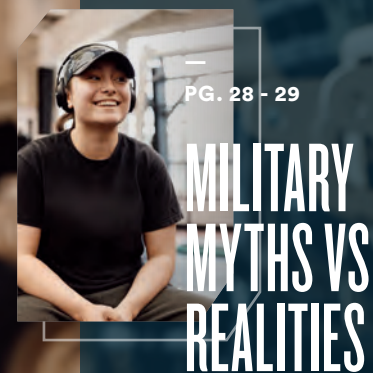
Thinking about continuing education, a career or simply what life could be like after high school or college?

In these pages, you'll discover stories from men and women who had the same big thoughts and decisions about the future as you. They explored their interests, followed their dreams and found their answers in the Military.

Find inspiration in these stories, explore the opportunities the Military has to offer and discover the path to your future.



WHAT'S INSIDE





CAPTAIN
DANIEL BIEBER
—
AIR FORCE

SENIOR AIRMAN
STEVEN TUCKER
—
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ALEXIS ROBISON
—
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

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—
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—
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OLIVIA BRIGGS
—
AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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STAFF SERGEANT
JOHN (JT) NIPP
—
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PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS
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—
NAVY

WARRANT OFFICER
ELLIOTT STOCKTON
—
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

LIEUTENANT
TONY SOLARES
—
COAST GUARD

SENIOR AIRMAN
CRISTINA TUST
—
AIR FORCE RESERVE

SERGEANT
PATRICIA REYES
—
MARINE CORPS

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS
JAMISON WARE
—
NAVY

SERGEANT
ANTHONY FOWLKES
—
MARINE CORPS



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WAYS TO Serve

Military service means completely different things to different people. It can be full time while balancing school, part time while balancing a career or any combination in between.

PART-TIME MILITARY SERVICE

Reserve

Each Service also has a Reserve force composed of service members who typically balance school or full-time civilian careers while serving in the Military. The Reserve components combine an individual's civilian experience with military skills. Reserve members can be called to Active Duty to support mission needs.

FULL-TIME CIVILIAN

MINIMUM ONE-WEEKEND-A-MONTH MILITARY
DRILL & TWO-WEEKS-A-YEAR ANNUAL TRAINING

"Part-time service is kind of like a slingshot to your career, or what you want to do in the future. The Military will sharpen your skills to actually bring it to the civilian side. Yes, my schedule is busy, but at the same time, there's always something new, always something exciting. And that's what I call living."

SGT. EDUARDO HIRALDO
POLICE OFFICER & ARMY RESERVE SOLDIER

FULL-TIME MILITARY SERVICE

Active Duty

Each Service has members who serve full time. They're referred to as Active Duty. In addition to working in an occupational specialty, active-duty service members can pursue a college or advanced degree, as well as off-duty activities, while they serve.

"I fell in love with [the Military]. I realized, This is actually what I want to do. The Military is more than just work. It's a family."

SGT. ANTHONY FOWLKES
MARINE CORPS

"Serving part time has been a really good opportunity for me. It's allowed me to go to college ... and experience training, see different parts of the country, meet new people, while still being able to come home in between all of that. I love it; it's the best of both worlds"

STAFF SGT. OLIVIA BRIGGS
LABOR AND DELIVERY NURSE & MEMBER OF THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD

PART-TIME MILITARY SERVICE

National Guard

The Army National Guard and Air National Guard are community-based, and report to the governor of their respective state unless called to protect U.S. domestic interests in times of conflict or natural disaster. They may also be deployed internationally alongside full-time service members when necessary. Members of the National Guard hold civilian jobs or attend school while conducting their military training part time.

FULL-TIME CIVILIAN

MINIMUM ONE-WEEKEND-A-MONTH MILITARY
DRILL & TWO-WEEKS-A-YEAR ANNUAL TRAINING

A DAY IN THE LIFE

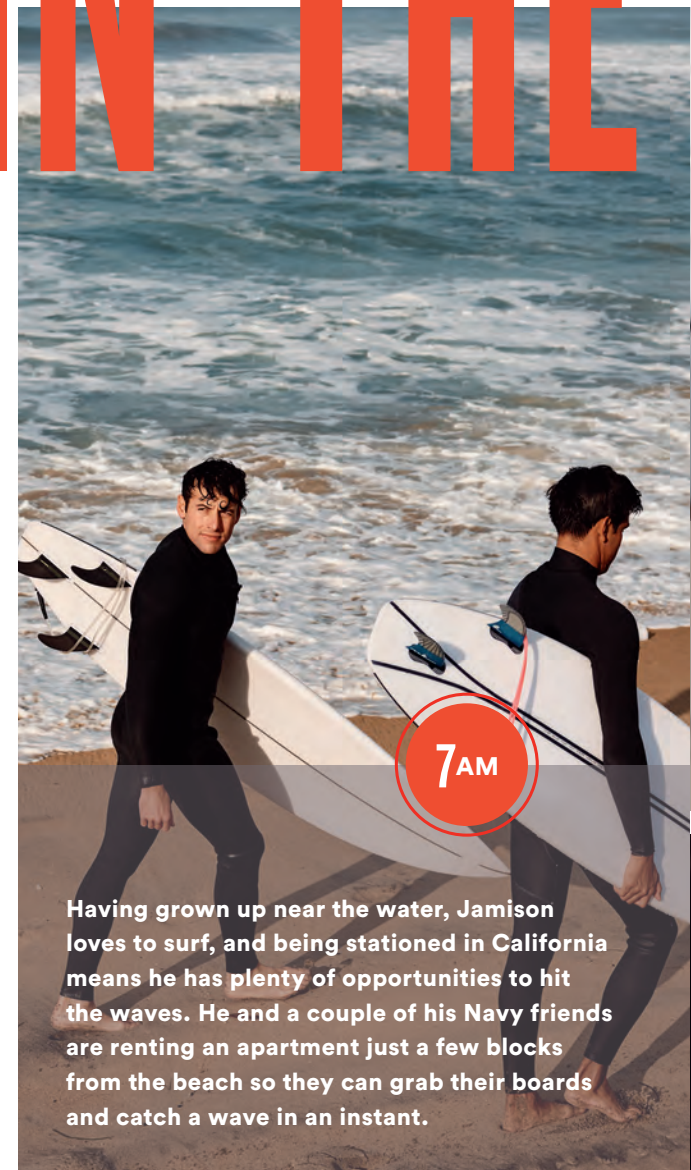
For Jamison, every day's different. As an aviation rescue swimmer, one day he could be taking to the skies and the next he could be training in the pool. No matter what, his days are filled with plenty of excitement, meaningful work and water.



6 AM

Jamison's morning starts out like a lot of ours — with a fresh cup of coffee. He fuels up with his own version of “bulletproof coffee,” a high-performance beverage that helps boost his energy and keeps him full.

Try out Jamison's recipe for yourself: blend French press coffee with one tablespoon ghee or grass-fed butter, one tablespoon MCT oil, one scoop collagen peptide protein powder, cinnamon and cacao butter.



7 AM

Having grown up near the water, Jamison loves to surf, and being stationed in California means he has plenty of opportunities to hit the waves. He and a couple of his Navy friends are renting an apartment just a few blocks from the beach so they can grab their boards and catch a wave in an instant.



12 PM

Jamison heads out to the flight line with other aircrewmembers. Regardless of what he's doing that day, safety is important, so Jamison inspects the aircraft and equipment to ensure it's fully operational.



3 PM

Following a lunch break, Jamison and other aviation rescue swimmers use one of the on-base pools to conduct various types of training, including emergency procedures in the event that someone gets injured and needs to be safely evacuated from the water.



9 AM

To start his workday, Jamison drives to base and signs out his flight gear. In his role, he can be tasked with a variety of missions from open-water search and rescue efforts to using sonar and other equipment to locate potential submarine threats, so every workday is a bit different.



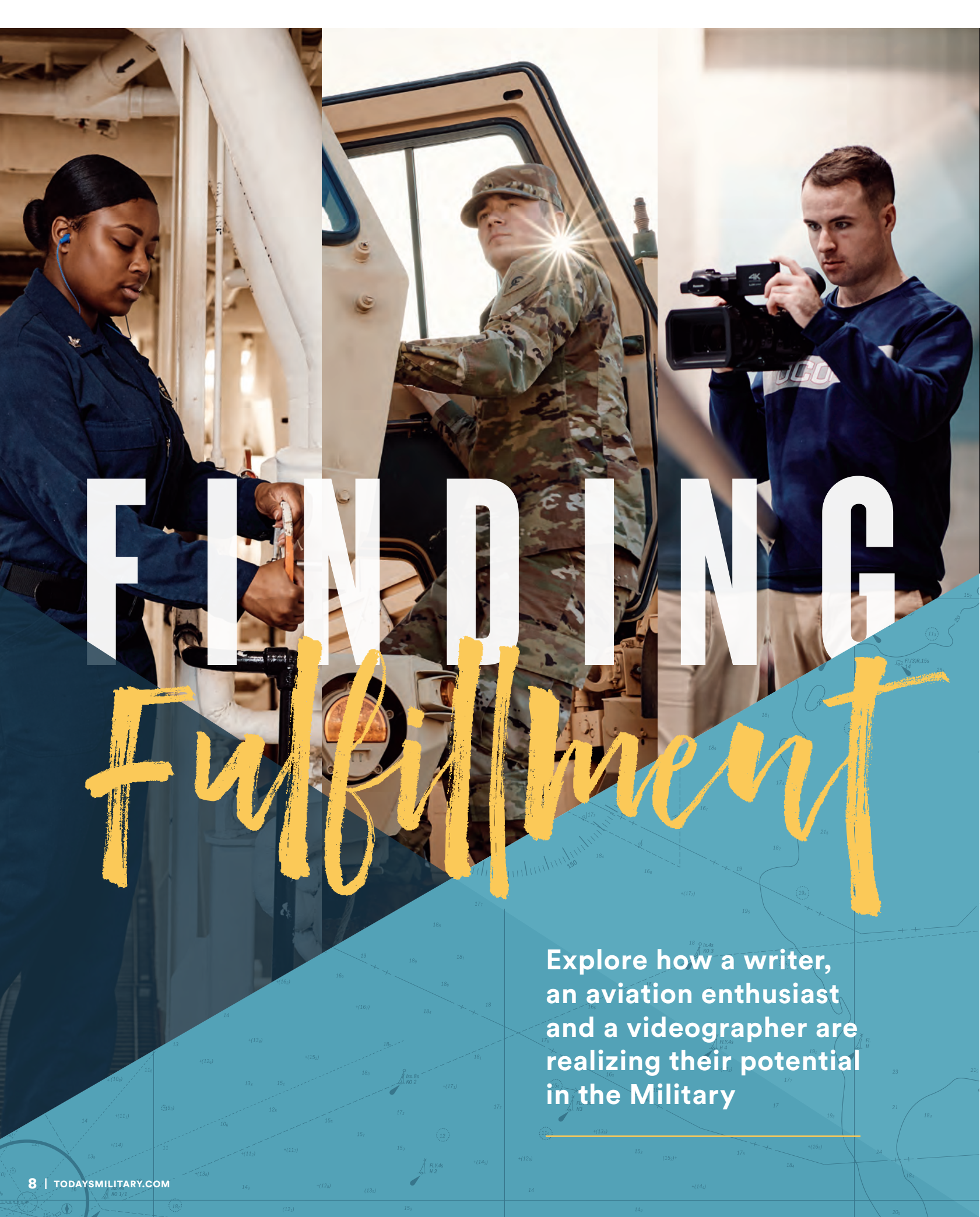
6 PM

Jamison's always helping people, so once a week after work he volunteers with a local charity that helps feed the homeless in San Diego. He works with others to make meals and distribute them downtown.



9 PM

After a quick bite for dinner, Jamison ends his day by connecting with family and friends. Whether that be through video chat or a quick phone call, “They don't have to be time-consuming conversations, just as long as we're present,” he says.



FINDING

Fulfillment

Explore how a writer, an aviation enthusiast and a videographer are realizing their potential in the Military

WRITING HER FUTURE

It's not every day you meet an engineer who's also a published poet. Say hello to Erynne Byrd, a Navy gas systems turbine technician.

There's a common misconception that serving in the Military strips people of their individuality. In her experience, Erynne has found this to be far from the truth. Whether she's out to sea or at home, Erynne says she's her most unique self each and every day.

For Erynne, this often means writing — something that's grown from a childhood hobby to a professional pursuit in recent years. This year, she published a collection of poems that shed light on her perspective on life.

"I wrote my book while I was out to sea," she says, referring to her recent seven-month deployment, during which she sailed across the Pacific Ocean to places such as Tokyo, Singapore and Australia. "I'd take moments in the middle of the ocean, and those moments would take me where I needed to go to be able to write. I wouldn't have been able to do it without the Navy. The support that I receive from the people I work with is amazing," she says.

"There are so many things the Military can provide for you as far as growing as a person. You can continue to be as creative as you want to be and still get the job done."

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS
ERYNNE BYRD
NAVY



In the USS Momsen's engine room, Erynne and a fellow Sailor clean and reassemble the fuel oil purifier to ensure all systems are running efficiently.

(Above) Erynne celebrates the release of her first book of poetry with friends and family.

HIGH-FLYING DREAMS

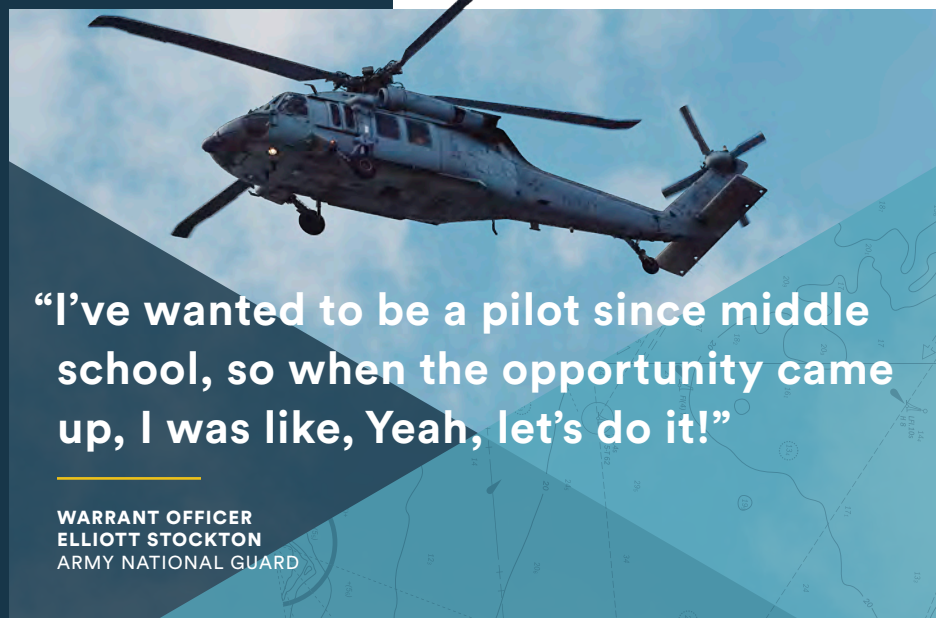
With a love for aviation and the support of his leadership, Army National Guard Warrant Officer Elliott Stockton began the journey that would help him achieve his dream of becoming a pilot.

Elliott initially joined the Ohio Army National Guard in an air defense role but has always known he wanted to be a pilot. Once he was exposed to all the Army National Guard had to offer, he started looking for opportunities to pursue his dream.

Elliott participated in the Army's Best Warrior Competition, where he had to compete against other Soldiers in physical fitness challenges, written exams and battle drills. After winning the competition and being named Soldier of the Year for the state of Ohio, he gained the attention of higher leadership in the state and had the chance to talk to them about his future. "The conversation was about where my career is going and what I want to do. I was like, I want to be a pilot," he says. "They said, 'Well, this is what you need to do. You take care of these things, and we'll make it happen.'"

After working hard and getting recognized for his efforts, Elliott was selected for a warrant officer position as a Black Hawk pilot. Warrant officers are highly specialized and have the technical expertise required for their jobs while also getting opportunities to train and lead other Soldiers. "I immediately accepted. I've wanted to be a pilot since middle school, so when the opportunity came up, I was like, Yeah, let's do it!" he says.

Elliott credits the Army National Guard for providing the guidance and support he needed to make his dream a reality. "[The Army National Guard] wants what's best for you," he says. "They know Soldiers have dreams and desires they want to accomplish. I've had a ton of help with everything. Everyone is supportive."



"I've wanted to be a pilot since middle school, so when the opportunity came up, I was like, Yeah, let's do it!"

WARRANT OFFICER
ELLIOTT STOCKTON
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



CAPTURING HISTORY

Behind every good story is the person telling it. Enter Steven Tucker, who spends a minimum of one weekend a month and two weeks each year serving as a broadcast journalist in the Connecticut Air National Guard. From filming training exercises to interviewing his fellow Airmen about their service experiences, Steven's work seeks to broadcast the power and purpose of the Guard to a wide audience.

By choosing to serve part time, Steven is able to live where he grew up and work full time as a video production assistant for the Division of Athletics at his alma mater, the University of Connecticut (UConn). Similar to his military service, Steven says he feels a sense of fulfillment when filming at UConn.

"[It's great when you know that] what you're doing is supporting something bigger than yourself," he says. "And you're serving a fan base that, like myself, has UConn as such a big part of their identity."

Steven credits his military training at the Defense Information School, where he learned how to effectively shoot and edit video, with helping him find such a fulfilling civilian career.

"[The Military] makes people realize, Hey, I can really make a difference here and gain skills and experiences that are really going to help me in my life going forward," he says.

"I really think I made the right career choice because it's had such a positive impact on not only what I do in the Military but outside as well!"

SENIOR AIRMAN
STEVEN TUCKER
AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Whether he's filming a Women's History Month video series highlighting top female Airmen or traveling to a place like Hawaii to shoot a training exercise, Steven takes a tremendous amount of pride in everything he does.

Education for Everyone

Whether you're looking to get technical skills, complete your undergraduate degree or pursue graduate school, the Military can give you the tools you need to accomplish your goals

Through the Coast Guard's **College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI)** program, Lt. Tony Solares had his college tuition paid for and upon graduation, was guaranteed entry to Officer Candidate School, where he was commissioned as a Coast Guard officer. He also had the opportunity to go to Charleston, South

Carolina, where he received training and exposure to the various missions and career fields available in his Service.

Taking part in the CSPI program helped Tony make an informed decision about his future and allowed him to shape his career based on his interests, all while alleviating the burden of student loans!

LT. TONY SOLARES
COAST GUARD



Elliott's taking advantage of the tuition benefits provided by the Army National Guard to complete his undergraduate degree.

WARRANT OFFICER
ELLIOTT STOCKTON
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



Jacob's using his benefits to pursue his goal of becoming a military physician. Once he completes his prerequisite courses, he'll use a medical-specific financial assistance program to go to medical school. These programs cover tuition and provide an average of \$60,000 a year for living expenses.

STAFF SGT.
JACOB CRANFORD
AIR FORCE RESERVE

Benefits by the

Numbers

98.9% of active-duty military officers have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 30.3% of the general population⁴

GI Bill Benefits

GI Bill education benefits are available to Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve members. Benefits are based on length of service, and can be used to cover all public school in-state tuition and fees?

Loan Repayment Program

Each of the Services and their components may offer some form of College Loan Repayment to new enlisted members to pay off college loans accrued prior to joining the Military. While requirements and opportunities vary by Service, all programs are designed to help recent students manage educational debt?

Did you know that

1 Million

veterans and their families are taking advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to attend college at little or no cost?³
—
GI Bill benefits can be shared with family members.

The College Fund Program

can be added to benefits received through the Post-9/11 GI Bill for eligible service members.

While each Service will determine who qualifies for this program, two basic requirements are that you:

- 1 Have a high school diploma.
- 2 Be enrolled in the GI Bill?

Tuition assistance covers up to **100%**

of tuition or expenses for courses taken at accredited colleges, universities, junior colleges or vocational schools?

The Military has several **medical-specific financial assistance programs** that will pay your tuition and an average of \$60,000 a year to attend classes and study.⁶

The federal government provides **\$150 BILLION**

per year in grants, work-study programs and federal loans to college students in Active Duty, National Guard or Reserve service?⁵

LEARN MORE | From financial aid and college funds to loan repayment programs, the Military offers many ways to pursue an education.

Visit todaysmilitary.com/education-training/paying-college

¹GOASTGUARD.COM/ACTIVE-DUTY-CAREERS/OFFICER-OPPORTUNITIES/PROGRAMS/COLLEGE-STUDENT-PRE-COMMISSIONING-INITIATIVE
²TODAYSMILITARY.COM/EDUCATION-TRAINING/PAYING-COLLEGE ³NCSL.ORG/RESEARCH/EDUCATION/VETERANS-AND-COLLEGE.ASPX
⁴DEFENSE MANPOWER DATA CENTER & CENSUS.GOV ⁵MILITARYONESOURCE.MIL/-/HOW-TO-USE-THE-MILITARY-TUITION-ASSISTANCE-PROGRAM
⁶MEDICINEANDTHEMILITARY.COM/OFFICER-AND-MEDICAL-TRAINING/MEDICAL-SCHOOL

Looking Out for Others

Something many service members have in common: a strong desire to help

For Coast Guard Reserve Petty Officer 1st Class Christiane (Chrissy) LaRosa, growing up near the beach in Florida fostered a love of being on the water.

Now Chrissy gets to work on the water each and every day in her home state, serving part time as a maritime enforcement specialist in the Coast Guard Reserve, and full time as an officer specialist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

When she's on Coast Guard Reserve duty, Chrissy patrols the waterways of Tampa Bay, making sure all commercial vessels are acting in accordance with the law. One day she could be boarding a vessel to check for the presence of illegal cargo; the next she could be escorting a cruise ship safely into port.

Chrissy's wide-ranging Reserve experience opened up a number of possibilities with coastal law enforcement units

in the civilian world, and ultimately helped her secure her civilian job as an FWC officer. In that role, she works full time maintaining the safety of recreational boaters and the surrounding wildlife.

"I truly believe my Coast Guard Reserve career assisted me in getting my civilian career moving," she says. "I'd already been in the Reserve for two years prior to my application ... a lot of those [military] experiences helped me move forward."

Since joining the Reserve, Chrissy's had the opportunity to gain a range of law enforcement experience. As a member of what's called a Port Security Unit, Chrissy has even deployed internationally, most recently to Cuba, where she helped monitor a security zone to keep unauthorized vessels at bay.

"My experiences have been so broad just in my eight years [in the Military]," she says. "Every day I can come in and I can do something completely different."



Whether she's patrolling the waters of Tampa Bay with the Coast Guard Reserve or with her civilian job at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Chrissy has embraced a life in law enforcement and working to ensure the safety of others.

After moving to the United States at a young age, Army Reserve Sgt. Eduardo Hiraldo quickly found a lifelong home in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. Never in his wildest dreams did he believe he'd grow up to serve others as both a police officer and a Soldier.

Serving part time as a heavy-machine equipment operator, Eduardo spends a minimum of one weekend a month and two weeks a year operating and maintaining vehicles used to build roads, parking lots and more for everything from humanitarian missions to combat zones. He describes his role as a "key factor to the whole Military" because without this equipment, the Military would lack the infrastructure needed to help Soldiers do their jobs on the ground.

"My job challenges me," he says. "I didn't know anything about it [prior to joining the Military] and my training taught me so much about myself and how I can be the best I can be and help others at the same time."

Apart from his military service, Eduardo is a full-time police officer with the New York Police Department. He takes great pride in his role of looking out for others — both in New York and around the world. He knows that if he can do it, anyone can. "You can really be anything you want in life if you dedicate your time and go out there and achieve it," he says.



An important part of Eduardo's job includes maintaining the heavy-machine equipment he operates.

"I'm a first-generation military member. I'm also a first-generation police officer. I realized early on this is how life is supposed to be: everyone helping one another."

SGT. EDUARDO HIRALDO
ARMY RESERVE

Giving Back

With an interest in helping people both at home and abroad, Marine Corps Sgt. Anthony Fowlkes takes advantage of volunteer opportunities in and out of uniform. After a tsunami hit Saipan, an island near Japan, he raised his hand to go overseas to help with the cleanup effort and assist in rebuilding the town.

Closer to home, Sgt. Fowlkes lends a hand at local animal shelters whenever possible.



"Personally, I volunteer as often as I can. Professionally, I also volunteer as often as I can — I'm constantly trying to take advantage of opportunities to help others."

SGT. ANTHONY FOWLKES
MARINE CORPS

Beyond the Uniform

STAFF SGT.
OLIVIA BRIGGS
AIR NATIONAL GUARD
—
STAFFORD SPRINGS, CONN.

There's no doubt Staff Sgt. Olivia Briggs has a full life. In addition to her civilian career as a labor and delivery nurse, she serves part time in the Connecticut Air National Guard. In that role, she helps fellow Airmen take advantage of a range of financial benefits the Military offers from education to signing bonuses.

In her free time, Olivia enjoys one of her favorite interests: drawing.

"I've always kind of been into doodling, but I picked it up more when I was in college and I took an art course. It's something that's very relaxing for me ... it's nice to have something where I can just clear my mind and decompress from everything."



After work, Raul often joins his wife and children at their neighborhood park on post for some quality family time.

SPC. RAUL MARTINEZ
ARMY
—
FORT BRAGG, N.C.



As a member of the Reserve, Cristina serves in her home state of Colorado where she enjoys hunting, fishing and hiking.

SENIOR AIRMAN CRISTINA TUST
AIR FORCE RESERVE
—
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.



“I have two awesome golden retrievers, Beau and Bailey. They’re my favorite dogs in the whole world. They love the water, so it works out perfectly. I just love being outside, so I figured out exactly how to accomplish that in my civilian and military lives.”

**PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS
CHRISSE LAROSA**
COAST GUARD RESERVE
—
TAMPA BAY, FLA.



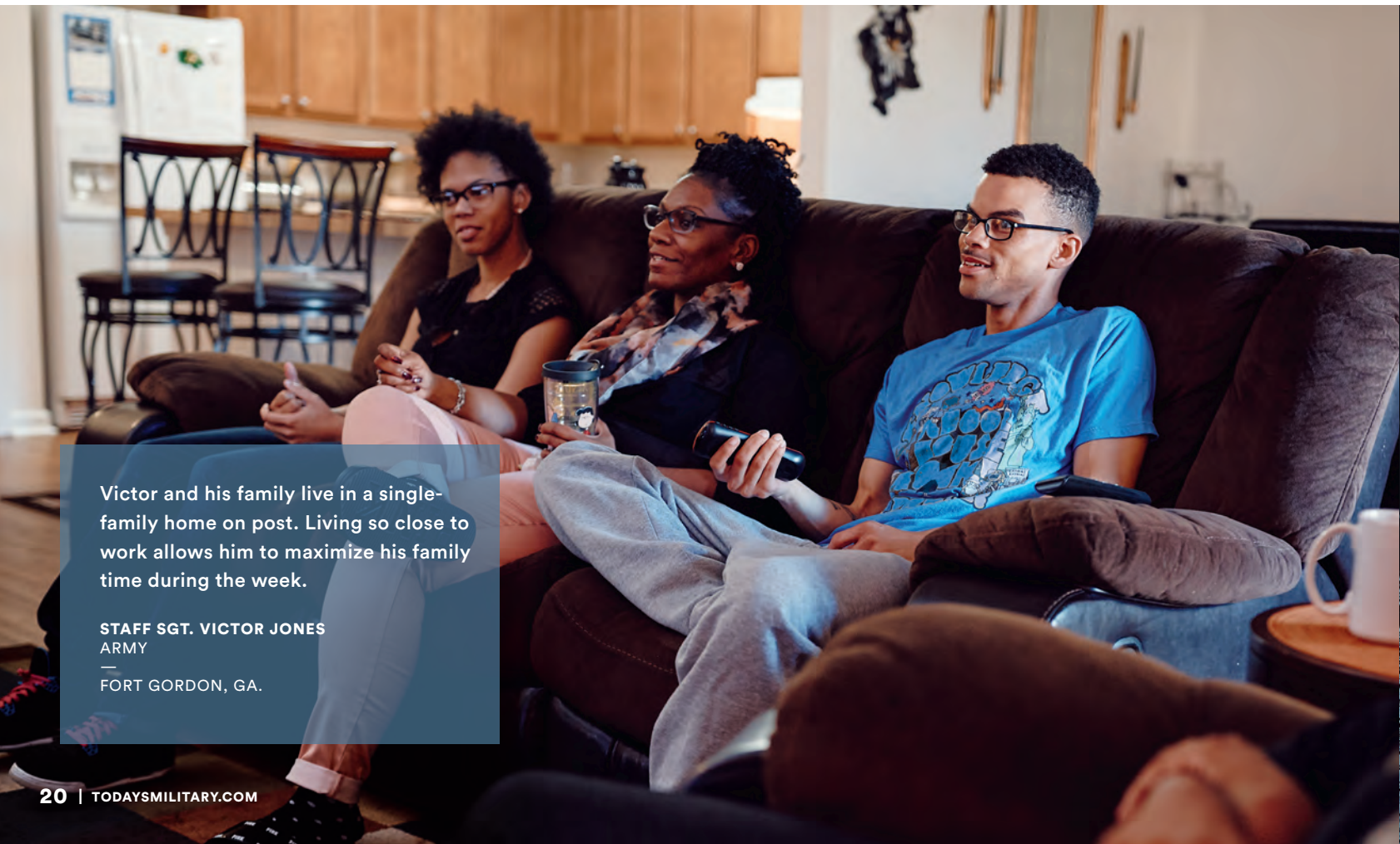
Aside from teaching and working toward his goal of becoming a military physician, Jacob serves in the Air Force Reserve. Frequently, his wife and son travel with him to Charleston, South Carolina, on his drill weekends.

STAFF SGT. JACOB CRANFORD
AIR FORCE RESERVE
—
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.



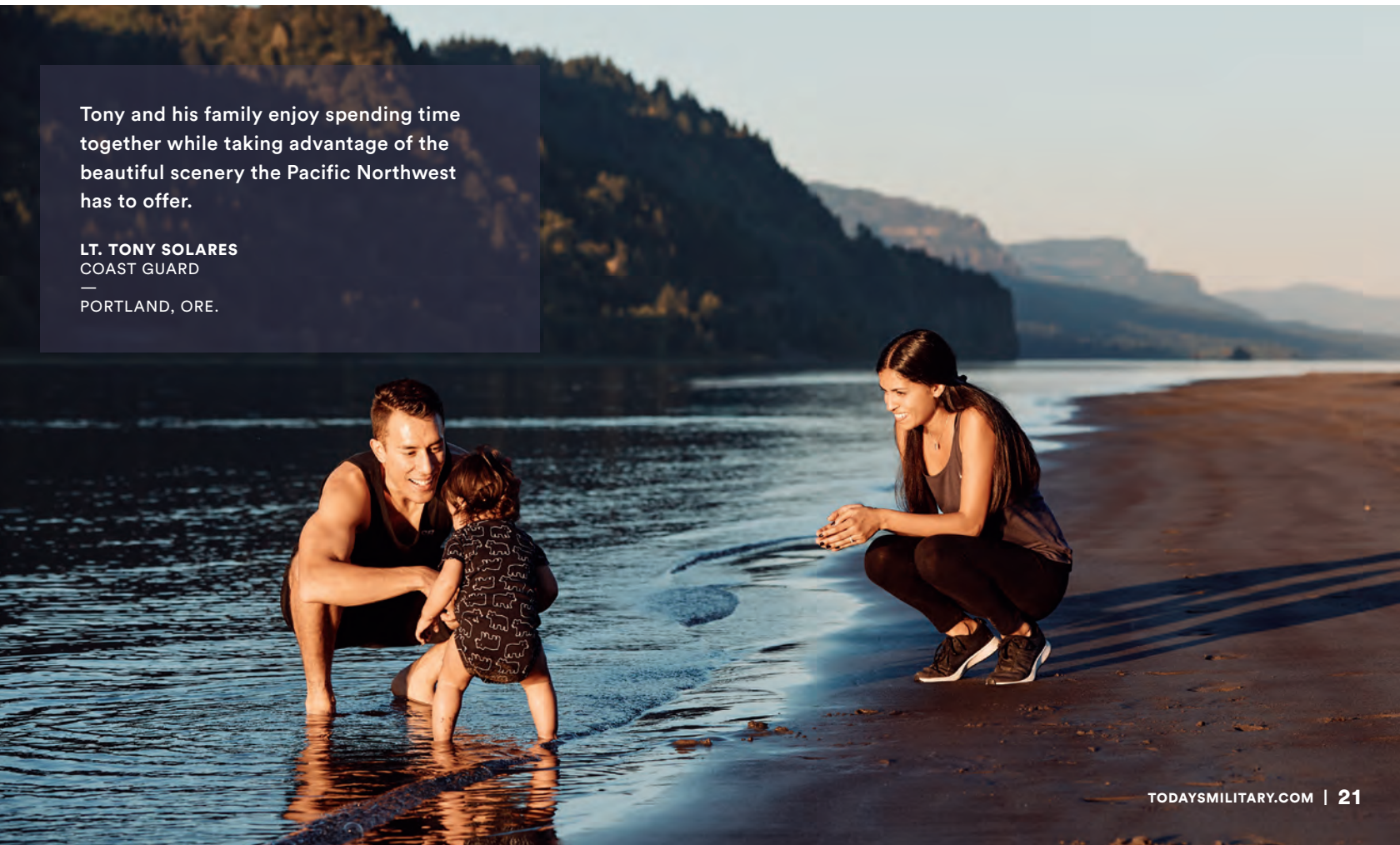
Alexis picked up the guitar in middle school and continues to play whenever she can.

PFC. ALEXIS ROBISON
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
—
GROVE CITY, OHIO



Victor and his family live in a single-family home on post. Living so close to work allows him to maximize his family time during the week.

STAFF SGT. VICTOR JONES
ARMY
—
FORT GORDON, GA.



Tony and his family enjoy spending time together while taking advantage of the beautiful scenery the Pacific Northwest has to offer.

LT. TONY SOLARES
COAST GUARD
—
PORTLAND, ORE.



Sgt. Fowlkes (left) lives in dormitory-style housing and enjoys using a nearby common space. There he can use the rec room, shared kitchen and outdoor space to hang out with fellow Marines, friends and family, like his twin brother who was visiting.

SGT. ANTHONY FOWLKES
MARINE CORPS
—
QUANTICO, VA.

Off the Clock



Living

From single-family homes to dormitory-style complexes, service members have a variety of housing options to fit their needs.



Community

Many military bases have amenities like pools, movie theaters, bowling alleys, beaches and parks that are available to service members and their families.



Travel

The Military offers vacation benefits, like space-available travel. This allows service members and their families to fly at no cost when seats on routine military flights are open.

Learn more about life in the Military at todaysmilitary.com/military-life



“One of the things we love to do is take the kids to Central Park and walk the trail or just hang out.”

SGT. AMMIE ACOSTA
ARMY RESERVE
—
NEW YORK, N.Y.



Daniel has always loved fishing, so now he's taking advantage of the private beach on base every chance he gets.

CAPT. DANIEL BIEBER
AIR FORCE
—
HURLBURT FIELD, FLA.

LESSONS

from
the

FIELD

The Military offers extensive training, whether it be in the classroom or in the field. These service members are leveraging the knowledge and skills they've been provided to educate others.



Being a combat engineer in the Marine Corps, Sgt. Patricia Reyes has a variety of skills. Using a combination of math and physical strength, her team has the ability to build bridges. These bridges allow vehicles to cross difficult terrain delivering needed equipment and supplies. She also works with demolition equipment whether it be for construction projects or clearing mines and minefields.

Currently Sgt. Reyes is instructing newly selected Marine Corps officers at The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico, Virginia. At TBS, new officers gain professional knowledge, culture and leadership experience with an emphasis on the duties, responsibilities and warfighting skills required to successfully lead Marines.

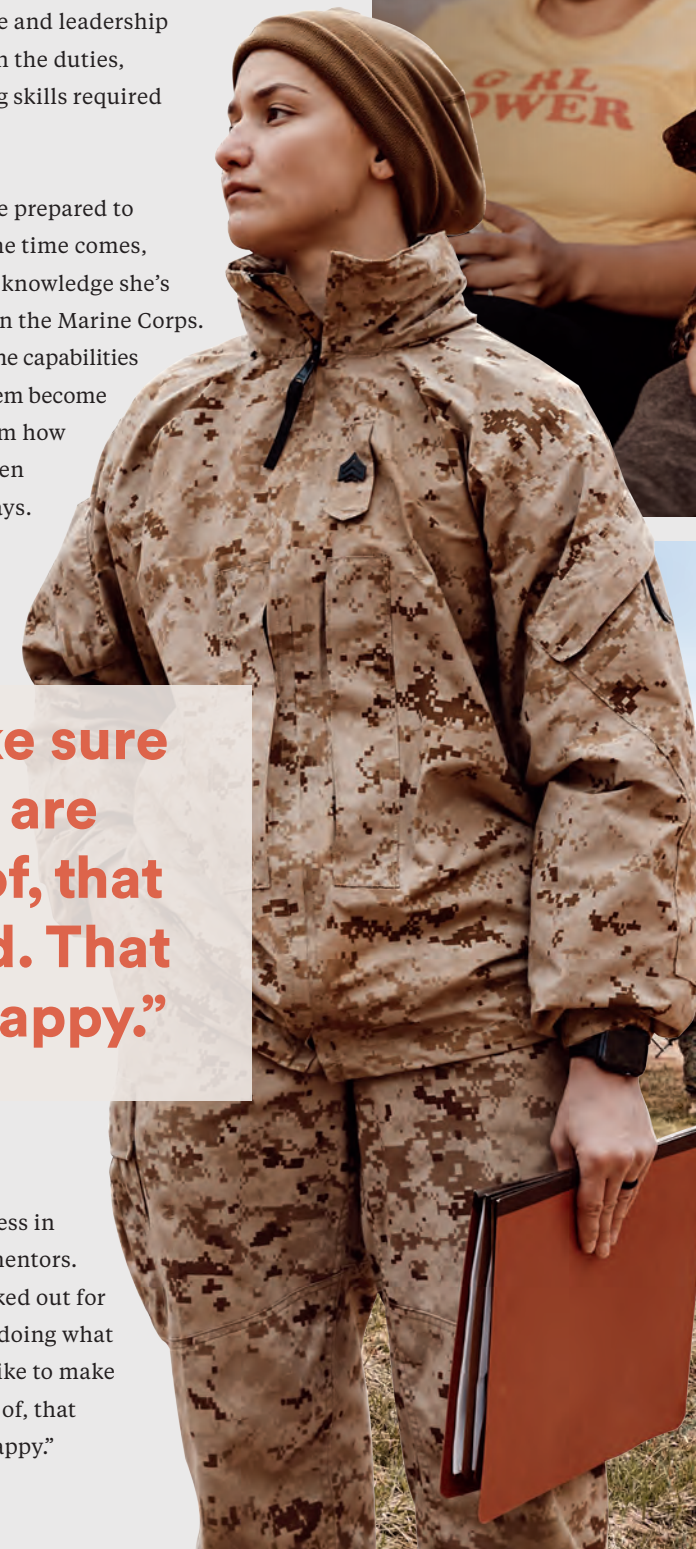
To ensure these new officers are prepared to lead their own Marines when the time comes, Sgt. Reyes shares the skills and knowledge she's learned through her own time in the Marine Corps. She's there to educate them on the capabilities of combat engineers, helping them become effective leaders. "We show them how engineering can be an asset when they get out to the fleet," she says. "I get to teach somebody about their job. It makes you feel important."

"I like to make sure my Marines are taken care of, that they're good. That makes me happy."

SGT. PATRICIA REYES
MARINE CORPS

Sgt. Reyes credits her own success in the Military to her influential mentors. "They took care of me. They looked out for my career and made sure I was doing what I was supposed to," she says. "I like to make sure my Marines are taken care of, that they're good. That makes me happy."

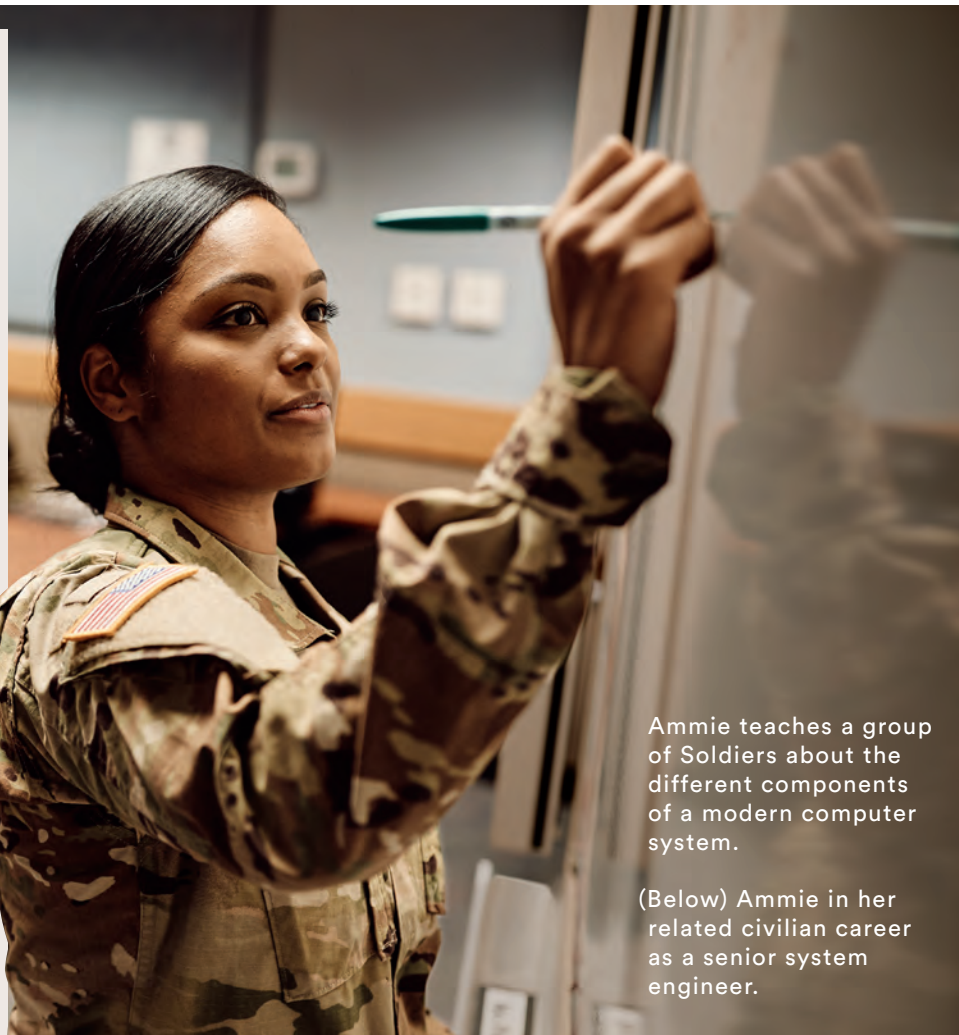
After work, Sgt. Reyes likes to unwind by playing video games with her wife and dog.



Sgt. Ammie Acosta, information technology (IT) specialist in the Army Reserve, has always been interested in technology. “I would go [to the library] every day after school and start playing on the computer,” she says. “I had no idea the Military had IT jobs! I thought everyone was going off to war. Then, once I got more information and that job popped up, I was automatically interested.”

Serving part time in the Army Reserve means Ammie trains a minimum of one weekend a month and two weeks a year. During drill weekends, she works to ensure networks are functioning and computer systems are secure and running efficiently. Sometimes, she’ll be asked to teach other Soldiers using what she’s learned from her military training, as well as her related civilian career as a senior system engineer, where she works on security software.

Opportunities like training fellow Soldiers have helped Ammie grow professionally in both her military and civilian careers. “I had never been in a leadership role. I’ve always been kind of shy,” she says. “[Now] I’m not focused on myself when I ask [Soldiers] to do things. I want them to do things for themselves. It’s pushing them to their potential.”



Ammie teaches a group of Soldiers about the different components of a modern computer system.

(Below) Ammie in her related civilian career as a senior system engineer.



“I’m not focused on myself when I ask [Soldiers] to do things. I want them to do things for themselves. It’s pushing them to their potential.”

SGT. AMMIE ACOSTA
ARMY RESERVE

INTERESTED IN A CYBERSECURITY CAREER?

The Military offers cybersecurity and information technology roles in every branch!

Try our Cyber Challenge at cybermission.tech



Technology is ever-changing so Victor has to adapt his curriculum to train his students on the latest updates.

Staff Sgt. Victor Jones is an IT specialist in the Army. “You could think of it like a desktop support specialist, but there’s a lot more involved with it,” he says. His job can include anything from troubleshooting computer problems to maintaining networks and constructing computer programs.

In addition to his IT responsibilities, Victor teaches Soldiers who are training to become IT specialists like him everything they need to know about their new roles. Teaching is one of the things Victor likes most about his job. “When the lightbulb goes off in a Soldier’s head, when I’m able to strike just the right balance for them to understand it, that’s what makes me happy,” he says.

“Because their eyes light up — ‘Oh, I got it!’ — it lets me know I’m effectively doing my job and they genuinely understand and are learning the material.”

STAFF SGT. VICTOR JONES
ARMY



Alexis and another Soldier use a compass to navigate during a training exercise.

As an interior electrician in the Army National Guard, Pfc. Alexis Robison not only uses her hands to do her job, she uses her knowledge and skills to teach other interior electricians how to execute some of the more technical parts of the job. These include how to maintain and repair electrical equipment and how to build electrical systems to power small tents and buildings in the field.

When she’s not serving part time, she works on her fitness at the local gym. “I’m really passionate about being physically fit and being strong. I’m at a point now where it used to be this rough task and it’s transformed into a hobby,” she says.

“For me, it’s giving people knowledge and then being hands-on. I can teach people new things about the electrical trade. I enjoy what I do because I like to be able to teach.”

PFC. ALEXIS ROBISON
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



MYTH | FEMALES WON'T SUCCEED

vs.

REALITY "One [myth] is if you're a female that you're not going to be able to make it. Our bodies are different, but you can push yourself to do a lot. Anyone can do it, you just have to have the right mindset."

SGT. PATRICIA REYES
MARINE CORPS



MYTH | THERE ARE ONLY COMBAT JOBS

vs.

REALITY "One of the biggest myths is that if you join the Military, you're just going to go out there and destroy, shoot. There's a need for everything. There's a need for engineers, Soldiers, electricians, cooks and lawyers. It's just like the outside world, but in a smaller, closely knit community. And this community needs all these working parts in order to be strong."

SGT. EDUARDO HIRALDO
ARMY RESERVE



MILITARY MYTHS vs. REALITIES

MYTH | THE MILITARY IS LONELY

vs.

REALITY "[Being in the Military], it feels like a family. The people that I work with, I go on vacation with, and I spend a lot of time with. I'm sure I'll have one or two of them in my wedding someday. That probably surprised me the most, how close you really do get with people because you develop such a tight-knit relationship."

STAFF SGT. OLIVIA BRIGGS
AIR NATIONAL GUARD

MYTH | IT'S A LAST RESORT

vs.

REALITY "The one I always hear is 'Join the Military because you don't have any skills or you weren't smart enough to go to college.' That's just not true at all — half the people I went to Basic Training with had degrees."

PFC. ALEXIS ROBISON
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



MYTH | DEPLOYMENT MEANS WAR ZONES

vs.

REALITY "I thought every deployment I was going on was just going to be Afghanistan and Iraq. That those were the only places the Military went, and I was very mistaken. I didn't know I was going to be going to Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore."

SGT. ANTHONY FOWLKES
MARINE CORPS



MYTH | YOU LOSE YOUR IDENTITY

vs.

REALITY "You don't have to stop chasing the dream you had before joining. I feel like you have more of an opportunity once you join because you meet so many people, you have so many more opportunities to really step out of who you thought you were and really come into who you are."

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS ERYNNE BYRD
NAVY



CAREER DRIVEN

Air Force Staff Sgt. JT Nipp's laid-back nature is one of his defining qualities. He's approachable, often smiling, and always eager to talk about his wife, his daughter, his dog or his friends.

It's his calm demeanor that makes him a perfect fit for one of the Military's higher-pressure occupations: explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technician.

"We're essentially the bomb squad of the Military," JT says. "For any explosive threat that a service member might see, we have to know how to make the situation safe."

Each day, he and his fellow EOD technicians prepare for situations they could face at home or overseas — from defusing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to using X-ray technology to scan something as small as a backpack for potential threats.

Over the past few years, JT has had the opportunity to put his training to the test, sweeping for explosives at high-profile events like the College Football Playoff National Championship and the presidential inauguration. For JT, this level of responsibility comes with an unparalleled sense of pride.



"I couldn't imagine a better life for myself right now."

STAFF SGT. JT NIPP
AIR FORCE

JT guides an F6 robot into its storage compartment. The device is known as a "stateside response robot" and is used primarily to assess potential explosives at home versus abroad.

(Bottom left) JT geared up in his EOD 9 bomb suit, which provides an incredible degree of protection from the effects of explosives should he need it.



CALM UNDER PRESSURE

As an infantry mortarman, Marine Corps Sgt. Anthony Fowlkes is trained to work in a fast-paced team environment, engaging targets with indirect fire and providing protection for his battalion of 350 Marines. Sgt. Fowlkes analyzes, allocates, coordinates and schedules mortar fire, integrating dynamic information from multiple sources. The ability to deliver these lethal and effective fires within a battalion's zone of action on short notice makes him a critical asset in optimizing the commander's combat power.

Sgt. Fowlkes understands not only the extent of the responsibility that comes with his role, but how his individual contribution impacts the overall mission. He credits the Military with providing the environment and training to strengthen his skills and giving him the opportunity to earn additional responsibilities — fostering both his professional and personal development.

While on deployment, Sgt. Fowlkes joined a jujitsu club and discovered his passion for martial arts. He then volunteered to become a Marine Corps Martial Arts instructor and now trains fellow Marines in hand-to-hand, knife and bayonet combat. Both the Marine Corps and Sgt. Fowlkes reap the benefits of his interest and training: "The opportunity was there, I tried it out and liked it, and now I can do it as part of my job!"

Getting to learn a variety of skills that align with his interests is one of the reasons Sgt. Fowlkes enjoys being in the Military. Another reason? Having the opportunity to instruct newly selected Marine Corps officers at the Infantry Officer Course in Quantico, Virginia. "My favorite part of my job is being a mentor," he says. "I have a lot to offer to the Marines that I'm in charge of or that I get to influence."



Since joining, Sgt. Fowlkes has become a certified personal trainer and enjoys sharing his renewed outlook on fitness with fellow Marines.

“My favorite part of my job is being a mentor.”

SGT. ANTHONY FOWLKES
MARINE CORPS



Sgt. Fowlkes assists another Marine with a mortar that would perform a variety of functions from destroying targets to firing smoke rounds for distraction.



Chrissy communicates potential security risks and violations to a fellow maritime enforcement specialist.

TAKING CHARGE

If you'd told Coast Guard Reserve Petty Officer 1st Class Chrissy LaRosa when she was younger that she'd be training others in the future, she probably wouldn't have believed you. "Initially, I was really bad at public speaking. Like, horrendous," she says.

But that changed after joining the Coast Guard Reserve. "I was a 22-year-old responsible for training individuals about how the Coast Guard's law enforcement operates," she says.

"I went from being a little shy to talking to all of these people and being well-respected. People understood that this job needed to be done and I was capable of doing it."

She was also a boarding officer responsible for getting a team onto recreational and commercial vessels on the water to ensure everything being carried into and out of the United States was accounted for through visa, passport and manifest inspections.

With the confidence Chrissy has gained in the Coast Guard Reserve, she's been able to achieve success in both her military and civilian careers.

Chrissy prepares to tow another boat to safety.

“I went from being a little shy to talking to all of these people and being well-respected. People understood that this job needed to be done and I was capable of doing it.”

PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS
CHRISSY LAROSA
COAST GUARD RESERVE





Daniel and his team during an underwater training.

SPECIALIZED SKILLS

For Air Force Special Tactics Officer (STO) Capt. Daniel Bieber, no two days are alike. From jumping out of planes to training underwater with his team, Daniel leads some of the most skilled professionals in the Air Force Special Operations community.

Daniel is among an elite group of special operators who are uniquely skilled to provide support for a wide range of missions. In both hostile and friendly environments, he and his special tactics team can be called upon to provide support for United States and friendly forces anywhere around the globe. Some of his specific duties include assault zone assessment and control, combat search and rescue and even providing real-time weather information to support current operations. Daniel and his team provide a unique skill set to a variety of missions, from counterterrorism to humanitarian relief.

It was an STO like Daniel who led the Thailand cave rescue mission in 2018, resulting in the safe extraction of 13 members of a youth soccer team. The STO and his team of special operators used creative problem solving and synchronized efforts to successfully execute one of the most complicated dive rescues in history.

Due to their specialized training, these skilled professionals are able to come together as a lethal fighting force and use inventive troubleshooting, willpower and dedication to complete their missions. Because the success of these missions can only be accomplished if everyone works as a team, the camaraderie found in Special Operations is unmatched.

“It’s all about trust. It requires a level of trust that can supersede almost anything you’ve experienced. That’s the kind of bond you’re working with when you’re talking about a Special Operations team,” Daniel says.

“It’s all about trust.”

CAPT. DANIEL BIEBER
AIR FORCE



Each day, Erynne puts her STEM skills to the test ensuring the USS Momsen’s engines keep running as efficiently as possible.



ENGINEERING A DREAM CAREER

It’s no secret that science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields have historically been dominated by men. But Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Erynne Byrd is defying the norm as a female gas systems turbine technician assigned to the USS Momsen, a large naval destroyer crewed by roughly 300 Sailors.

Erynne works each day to ensure the Momsen’s engine systems are running properly — from scientifically testing fuel for harmful contaminants before it’s used to maintaining the mechanical components of the engines themselves.

Coming into the Military, Erynne had little engineering experience. She had been a standout NCAA Division 1 runner in college until a career-ending injury left her searching for a new identity. She unexpectedly found it in the Navy — in a STEM role, no less — after consulting with a recruiter. Once she joined, the Navy sent her to fuel and maintenance schools, which gave her the math and science skills she needed to thrive in her new role as a gas systems turbine technician.

Above all, she hopes her story will inspire young girls to pursue a career in STEM. “Traditionally, there’s not much support for girls going into this field,” she says. “I want young girls to know they’re capable and that it’s OK to want to do something different from what society tells them to do.”

“I want young girls to know they’re capable and that it’s OK to want to do something different from what society tells them to do.”

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS
ERYNNE BYRD
NAVY



SPOONFUL OF CREATIVITY

Army Spc. Raul Martinez's interest in baking goes back to his childhood in Puerto Rico. He spent a lot of time in the kitchen with his grandmother, learning family recipes and growing his love for the craft. After high school, Raul went to the Instituto de Banca y Comercio, the school where he started his formal culinary education.

When Raul decided to join the Army, he was able to turn his love of culinary arts into a career. Now he's a culinary specialist responsible for baking and cooking in one of the 11 dining facilities (DFACs) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina — the largest military installation in the country with more than 50,000 Soldiers.

Since joining, Raul's had the opportunity to further his culinary education through various training programs provided by the Army. These programs helped advance the skills Raul uses daily, including how to develop menus and put his culinary chops to the test.

In his role, Raul and his team create the weekly menus, or "production schedules," and prepare the food for Soldiers who eat in his DFAC. An aspect of the job Raul really loves is the creative freedom he has day to day — from adding his own special twist to brownies (an extra dash of cinnamon) to bringing a touch of Puerto Rico to "lasagna night" (the secret ingredient is plantains), Raul has proven himself by making delicious food everyone can enjoy.

Raul knows nothing beats a tasty-looking meal, whether it be at home or work. "I like cooking because I can express myself through the food — most people take the 'first bite' with their eyes, and I like creating beautiful plates that are also delicious and make you feel good," Raul says.



"I like cooking because I can express myself through the food — most people take the 'first bite' with their eyes, and I like creating beautiful plates that are also delicious and make you feel good."

SPC. RAUL MARTINEZ
ARMY



Cristina chose a medical career in the Air Force Reserve, as it relates to her civilian career goal of being a radiologist.

MEDICINE IN THE MILITARY

Senior Airman Cristina Tust has always had an interest in medicine. "I'm extremely passionate about taking care of others, so I chose a medical career both in and out of uniform," she says.

Cristina is a flight medic in the Air Force Reserve, working with two nurses and three medical techs to care for patients in flight while they're being transported to wherever they'll be getting definitive care. She assists in configuring an Air Force plane into a flying hospital, checks the vital signs of patients and monitors them to ensure they remain stable during the flight. "I knew I wanted to do something with hands-on patient care. I wanted to be actually helping someone," she says.

In her civilian life, Cristina balances school and a part-time job at her parents' restaurant. She has her sights set on a career in radiology, and the Military is helping her achieve her goals.

"When I started my application for radiology school, I had a ton of credits that I didn't realize I had from all the trainings you get in the Military," she says. "I've used tuition assistance and have been able to progress in my civilian school without paying a dime."



Whether you're an aspiring physician, a physician-in-training or an established physician, you can join the Military at nearly any stage of your medical career. Additionally, the Military offers some of the most robust funding opportunities available for education to help you get there.

To learn more, visit [medicineandthemilitary.com](https://www.medicinandthemilitary.com)

When Friends Become

Family

The Military forges
new bonds and strengthens
the ones you already have

“I’ve made some of my best friends in this world through the Military — people I know I will be friends with for life. It’s a totally different friendship built, and it’s so strong. That’s probably one of the best things.”

SENIOR AIRMAN CRISTINA TUST
AIR FORCE RESERVE



“One of my best friends in the Air Force took my spot in a recent deployment so I wouldn’t have to miss the first seven months of my child’s life ... It speaks volumes to the level of camaraderie in the Military.”

STAFF SGT. JT NIPP
AIR FORCE



“Another great thing about the Army Reserve is the friends. We’re all friends outside of the Military. They’re like family. The friends that you make in the Military become your everyday friends.”

SGT. AMMIE ACOSTA
ARMY RESERVE



“If you join the Army, you’ve got family. You get real brotherhood. Every Sunday, my family and neighbors [who also live on post] come over, and we cook and eat and spend time together.”

SPC. RAUL MARTINEZ
ARMY



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