

# AZ Nurse UPDATE

Created by Republic Custom Publishing in association with the Arizona Nurses Association

## Serving Uncle Sam

Military nursing career leads to Navajo Nation

THE ARIZONA  
REPUBLIC



**We serve a far-flung population of 10,000 people who often come from very far away to be seen in the emergency room.”**

Stephen Navarro, a lieutenant commander at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corp.

## MILITARY NURSES GAIN A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

See the world? You bet. Experience combat conditions? Often. Get unparalleled experience in the nursing field? Certainly.

Signing up to be a military nurse opens you up to all of this and more.

Even if it doesn't result in a career promotion, serving during a war can be a life-changing experience, many military nurses say.

For Stephen Navarro, LCDR, U.S. Public Health Service, NC, being a U.S. Air Force nurse was a great experience that led to his career today on the Navajo reservation.

Navarro enlisted in 1988, working as a dental assistant and later as a medical technician in the Air Force Reserve. After becoming an R.N., he served as a U.S. Air Force officer from 1998 to 2004. He worked as an Air Force nurse in military hospitals around the United States.

After starting a family, moving from base to base every few years became exhausting. Then he discovered that by working for the U.S. Public Health Service, he could keep the same pay grade and benefits and continue to work as a nurse. He

made the move, arriving in 2005 at his assignment on the Navajo Nation. Now 39, Navarro is a lieutenant commander at the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corp. where his job involves recruitment and retention of other nurses.

### ISOLATED AREA

Although Navarro said he had no idea what to expect when he was sent to work in such an isolated and rural area, he derives great satisfaction in helping people who may have no electricity, speak no English and need medical help.

“We serve a far-flung population of 10,000 people who often come from far away to be seen in the emergency room. They have a lot of needs, and it's very fulfilling to help them,” Navarro said.

In addition, the locals have embraced him and his family, so he feels like he is part of the community.

“Some people travel to the Third World to help others, but there is a lot of work to be done here. You don't have to travel across the world to feel like you are making a difference,” he said.

Cover photo:  
MICHELLE LEWIS



**STEPHEN NAVARRO, LCDR**

Photo: MICHELLE LEWIS