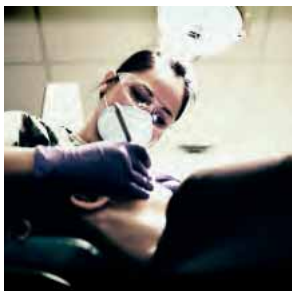
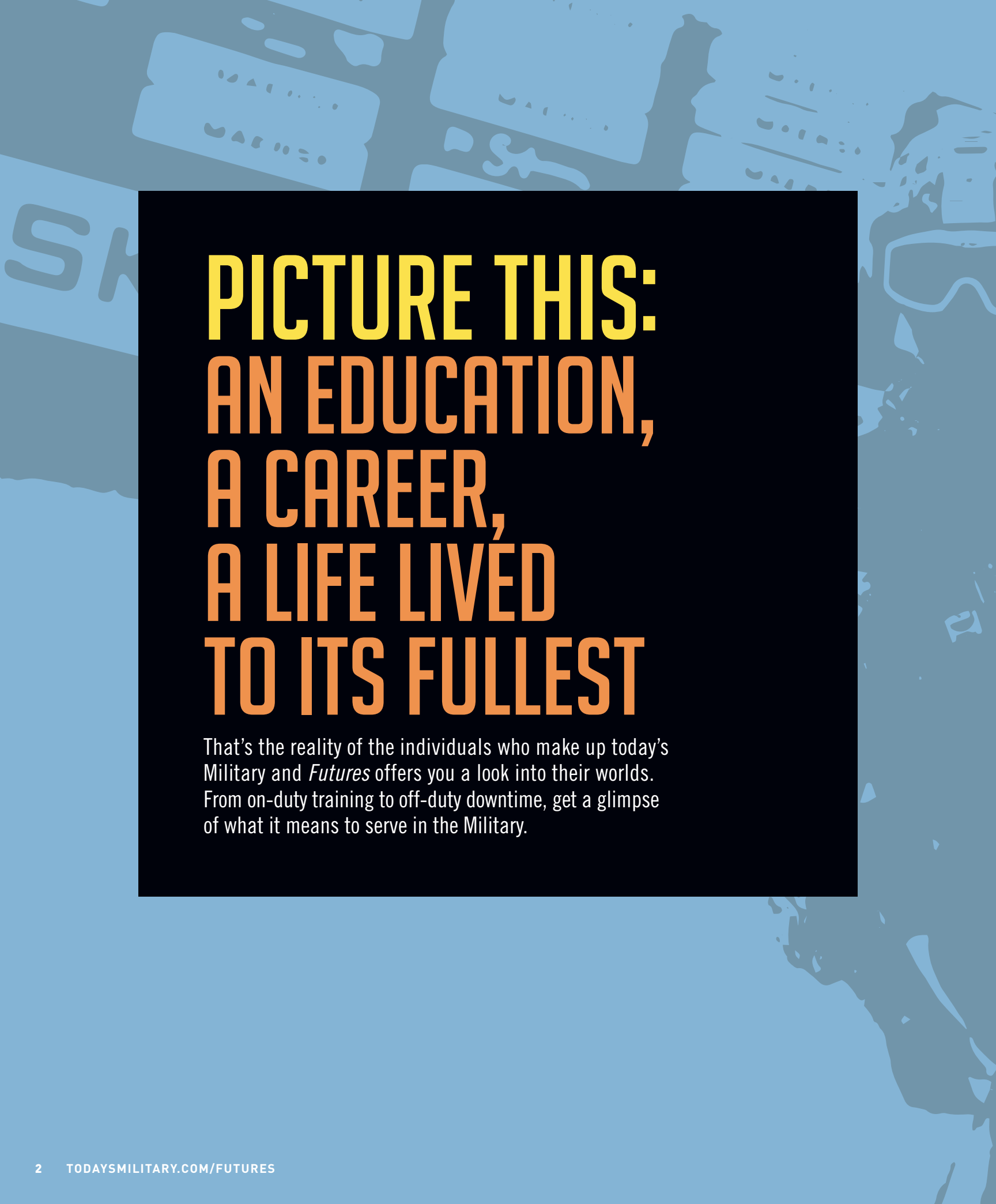


FUTURES

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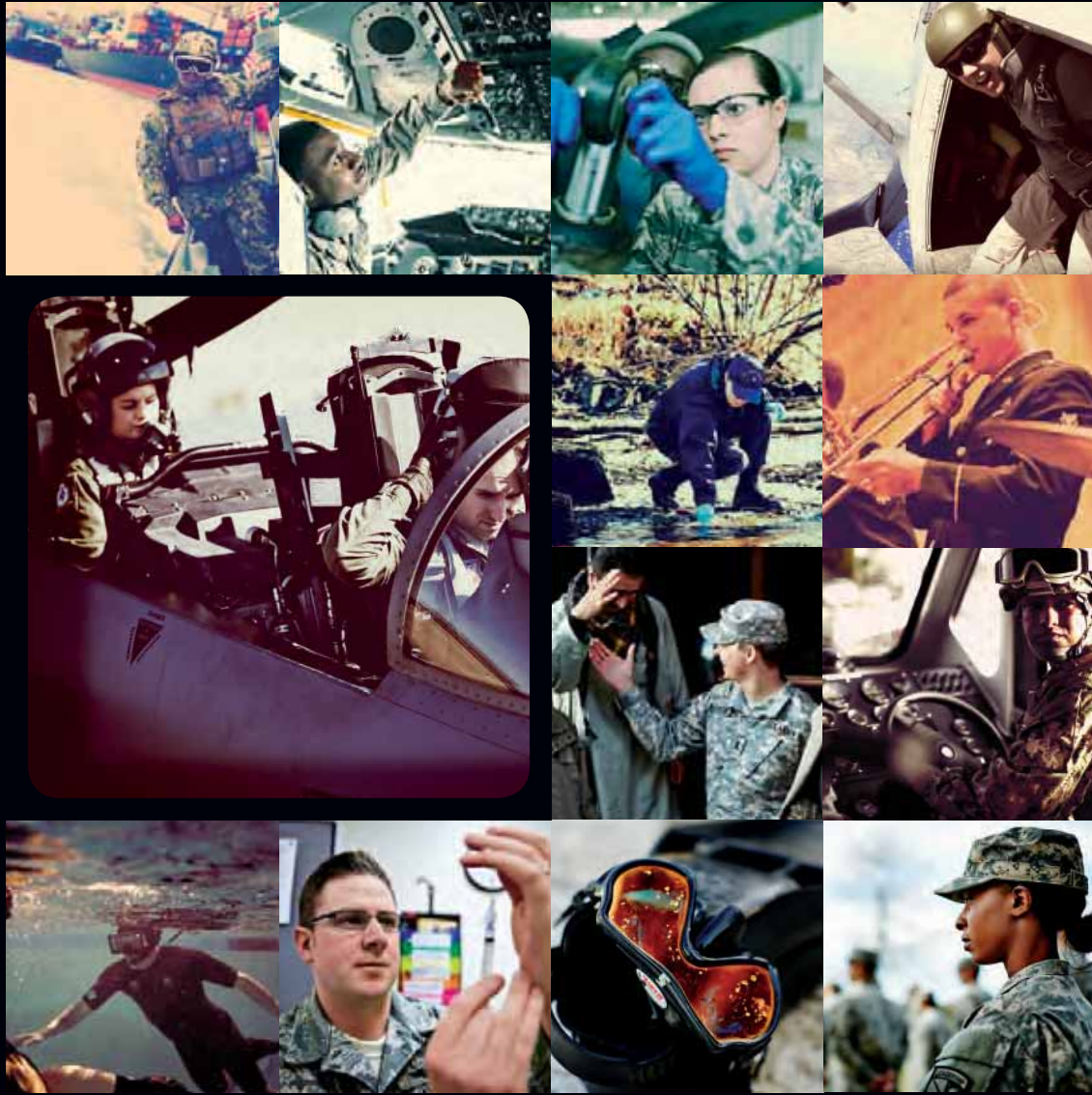


@FUTURESMAG Go your own way

The background is a light blue color with a faint, stylized image of a person in military gear, including a helmet and goggles. There are also some blurred shapes that look like pieces of equipment or documents. The text is centered in a black box.

PICTURE THIS: AN EDUCATION, A CAREER, A LIFE LIVED TO ITS FULLEST

That's the reality of the individuals who make up today's Military and *Futures* offers you a look into their worlds. From on-duty training to off-duty downtime, get a glimpse of what it means to serve in the Military.



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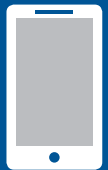
A TEAM AT 10,000 FT

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START YOUR JOURNEY NOW

FOLLOW

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GO YOUR OWN WAY

The opportunities available in the Military are as diverse as the 18 young service members you're about to meet.

Their lives might not be what you expect and are just a few examples of how you can define your future in the Military.



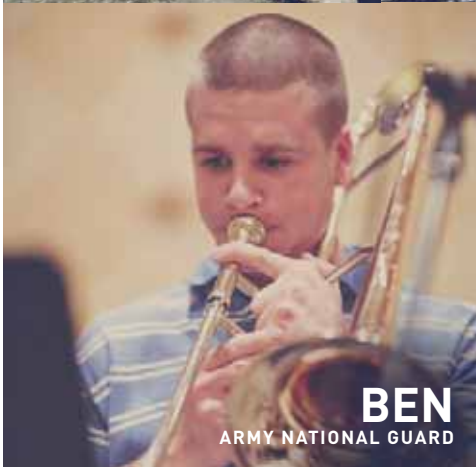
KYLIE
ARMY



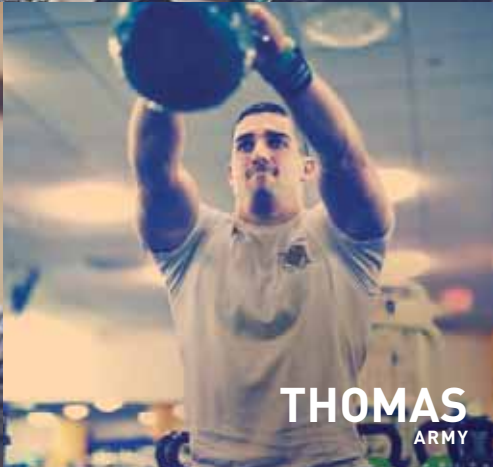
DIONNE
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



ALEC
ARMY RESERVE



BEN
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD



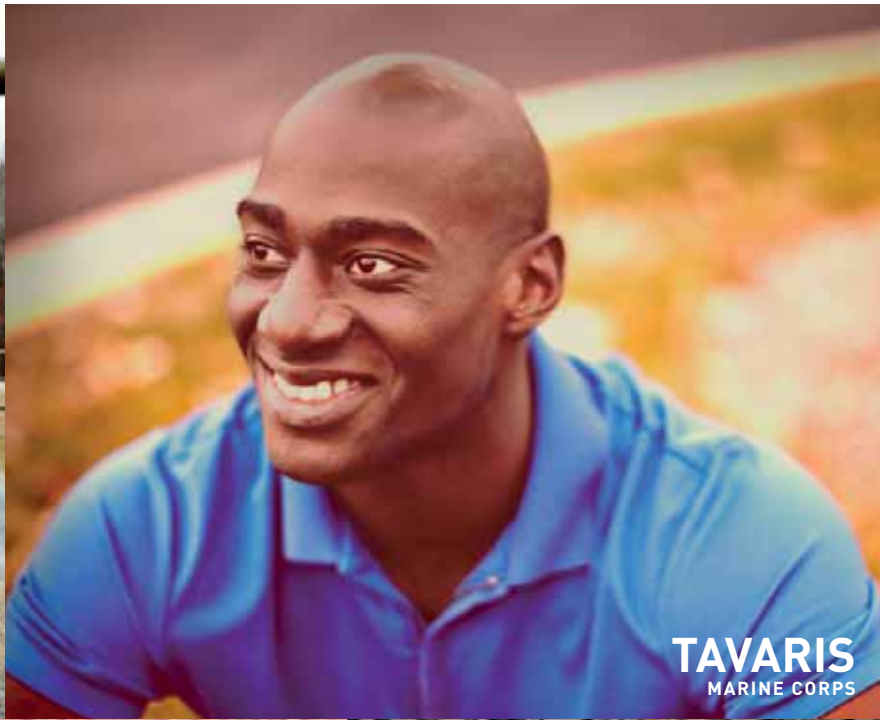
THOMAS
ARMY



JENNIFER
ARMY RESERVE

ARMY





TAVARIS
MARINE CORPS

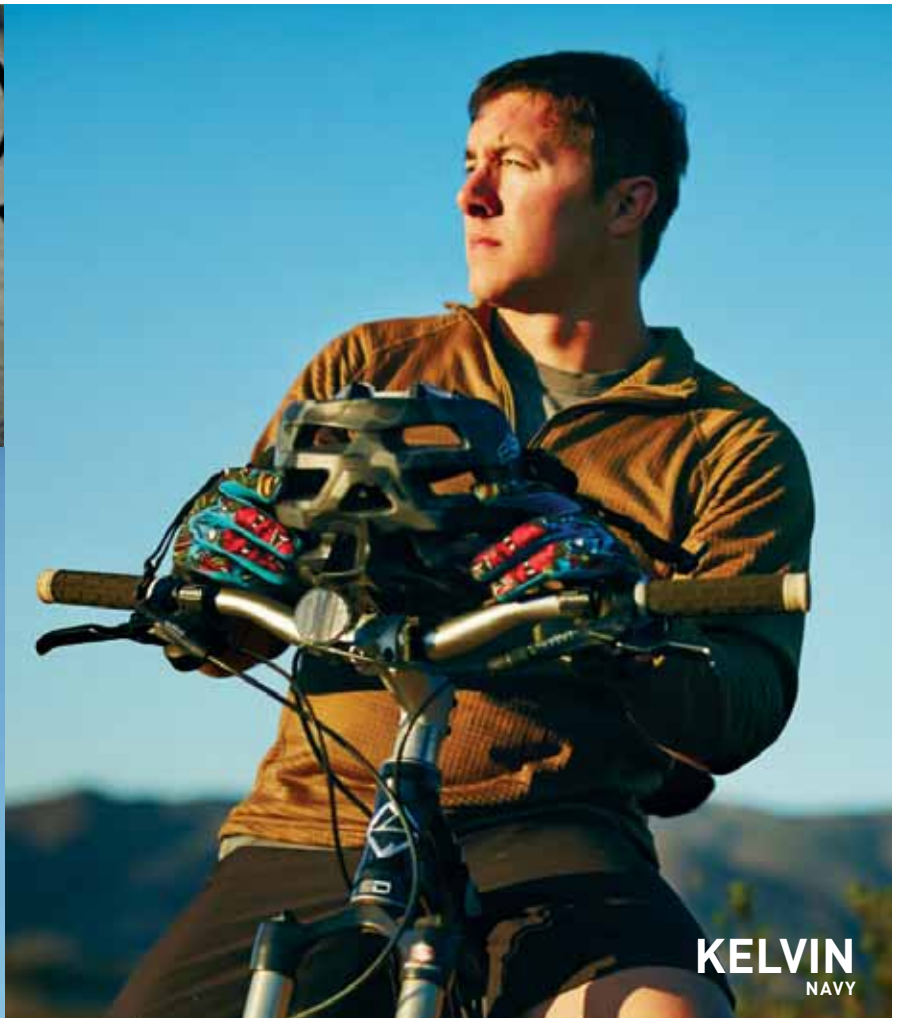


AKHIL
MARINE CORPS



MARINE CORPS





KELVIN
NAVY

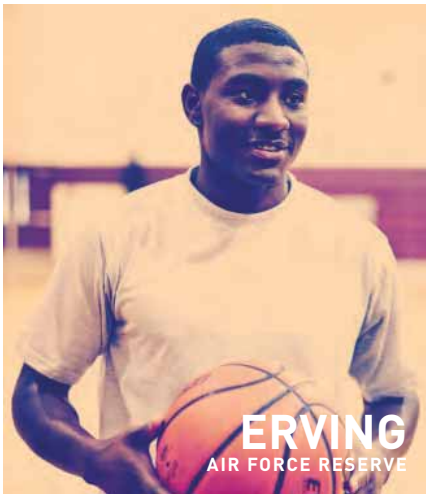


NICK
NAVY

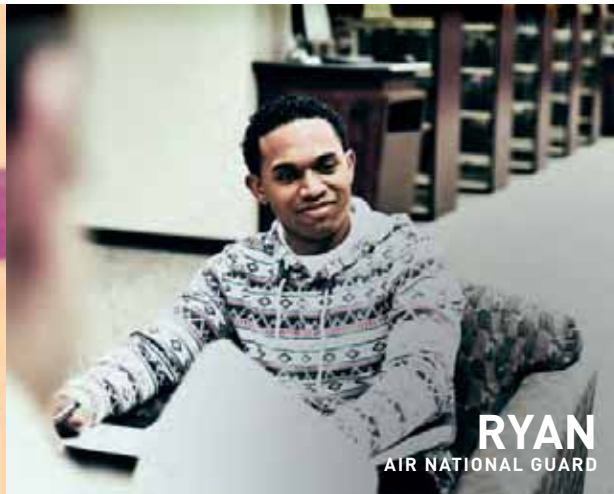


NAVY





ERVING
AIR FORCE RESERVE



RYAN
AIR NATIONAL GUARD



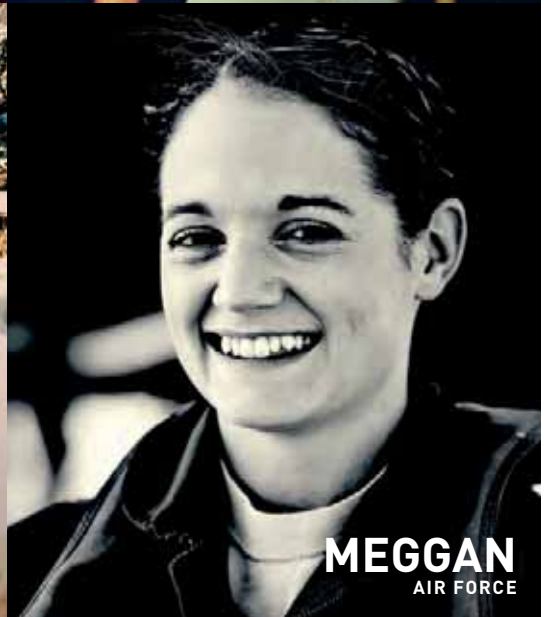
JESSICA
AIR FORCE RESERVE



AUGUST
AIR FORCE



JASON
AIR NATIONAL GUARD



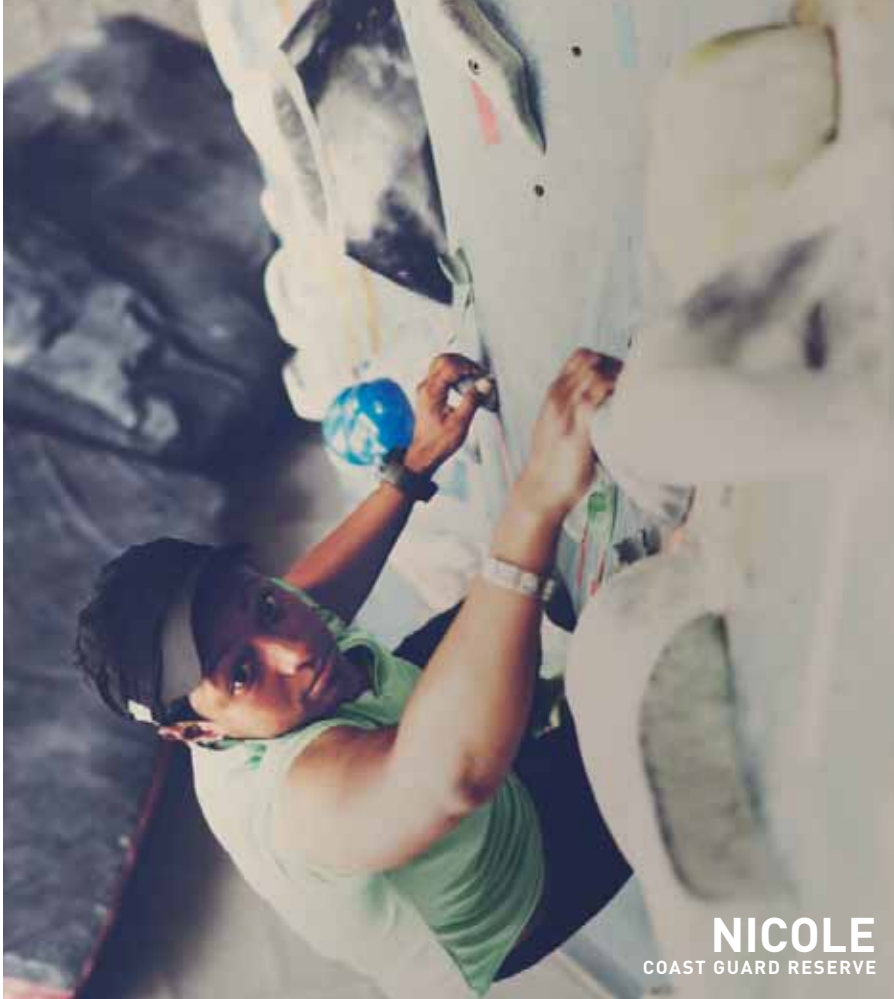
MEGGAN
AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE





REBECCA
COAST GUARD



NICOLE
COAST GUARD RESERVE



COAST GUARD



Rise Up

ONE MILITARY, MANY WAYS TO SERVE

ACTIVE DUTY

Each Military Service has members assigned to full-time duty. They're referred to as Active Duty.



“AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, I WANTED TO GO ON ADVENTURES AND SEE DIFFERENT THINGS. AND I THOUGHT, ‘WHY NOT SERVE MY COUNTRY AT THE SAME TIME SINCE IT’S GIVEN SO MUCH TO ME?’ ”

— Air Force 1st Lt. Meggan Purkett

FIND YOUR PASSION TODAY.

VISIT [TODAYSMILITARY.COM/CAREERS](https://www.todaymilitary.com/careers) TO LEARN MORE.

NATIONAL GUARD

The Army National Guard and Air National Guard are controlled by state governments unless called to serve during U.S. and international emergencies or to support military objectives overseas. Members of the National Guard hold civilian jobs or attend college while maintaining their military training part time.



“I JOINED THE MILITARY FOR THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS. I LIVED THE EXACT SAME LIFE AS MY COLLEGE ROOMMATES, BUT ONE WEEKEND OF EVERY MONTH I WOULD DISAPPEAR, DO MY DUTY AND COME BACK.”

— Army National Guard Spc. Ben Peterson

RESERVE

Each Service also has a federally controlled Reserve Force comprising service members who balance full-time civilian careers or school while serving in the Military. The Reserve is community-based, combining military skills with civilian experience. Members of the Reserve can be called to Active Duty to support mission needs.



“I WENT TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, BUT IT WASN'T RIGHT FOR ME AT THE TIME. I JOINED THE RESERVE BECAUSE I KNOW I WANT TO GO BACK TO COLLEGE IN THE FUTURE, AND AS A RESERVIST I'LL HAVE MORE TIME TO ATTEND CLASSES WHEN I'M NOT DRILLING.”

— Air Force Reserve Senior Airman
Jessica Haig



Akhil and members of his unit work together during a training exercise.



HEAD *of the* CLASS

Education is a huge part of service members' lives.

Whether it's attending an elite university, an intensive post-college program or figuring out which path to take, read how

four service members are taking education to the next level.



A

As an Air Force ROTC cadet at Cornell University, 1st Lt. August DeRosa had the college experience he always wanted while preparing to become the military officer he always dreamed of being — without the Ivy League price tag.

“Applying to college ROTC programs is a lot like applying to college. You have to write essays and get recommendations. And you also have to prove you’re physically fit,” August explains. “I remember sending away my application and waiting to hear back from ROTC headquarters. When I did hear back, the Air Force told me they wanted me in their ROTC program and were willing to help me through college financially.” August was then accepted at Cornell, where he majored in civil engineering.

During his freshman year, August decided to pursue a joint degree in civil engineering that would allow him to earn both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in 4 1/2 years. “I sent a letter of request explaining that I’d be more valuable if they let me stay an extra semester beyond my bachelor’s degree and finish my master’s degree,” he says. The Air Force ROTC program agreed a master’s degree would benefit both August and the Military and approved his request.



August climbs into the cockpit of an F-15E Strike Eagle.



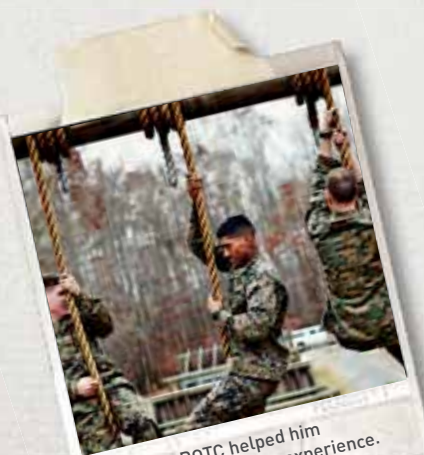
August practices the piano.



For Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Akhil Iyer, Naval ROTC provided more than just a way to pay his Stanford University tuition. It provided him with mentors who helped him navigate college. “I had a great opportunity to learn from upperclassmen; everything from what classes to take, to how to balance homework with my ROTC commitment. It was a huge help to me,” Akhil says. Akhil — who was an international relations major and Arabic minor — chose to accept a commission in the Marine Corps just as his mentors had done.

Both say there’s a misconception that service members aren’t highly educated, but they know better. “Not only is it part of an officer’s development to have a college degree, but the Military often requires that officers have multiple degrees,” August says.

Akhil agrees. “People think that those who serve are not particularly smart, but having the mental capacity to learn quickly, think critically and adapt to new situations is critical,” Akhil explains.



Akhil says ROTC helped him throughout his college experience.

“The Military doesn’t want someone who knows just one thing. They want someone with a whole spectrum of knowledge, wisdom and experience. They want the total package.” — Air Force 1st Lt. August DeRosa



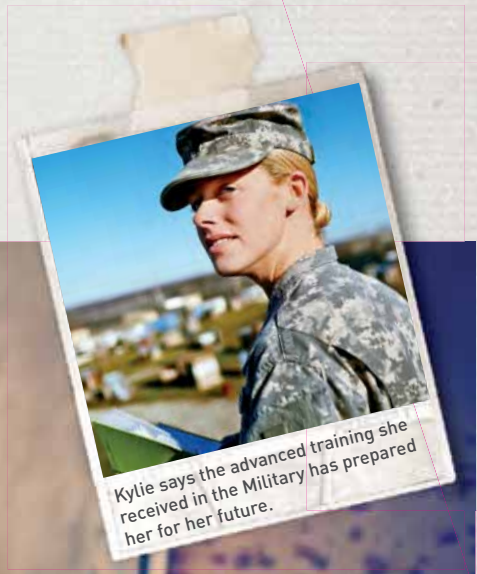
PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

The skills service members gain in the Military not only enable them to defend our nation, but also prepare them for life after service.

Army Spc. Kylie Furstenau graduated from college with a major in Spanish, then joined the Military. Kylie started her job search after graduation but had trouble. "Employers really wanted job experience, and I didn't have any," she explains.

Then Kylie learned the Military would pay her to learn a new language, guarantee her a job and repay her student loans. Soon she was in an intensive language program in Monterey, Calif., learning Arabic. "I don't think there is anywhere outside the Military where I could learn Arabic in a year and a half, and get paid for it," she says.

Today Kylie is an Army linguist, identifying, analyzing and translating foreign communications to meet our country's needs. And with her Arabic skills she is well-positioned for the future. "Whether I stay in the Military or move into the private sector, I'd like to stay in intelligence," she says. "I could be a government contractor, or work as a civilian. The Military has prepared me for anything I want to do in the future."



Kylie says the advanced training she received in the Military has prepared her for her future.





For Air National Guard Senior Airman Ryan Holley, his military service not only helped him pay for college, but it's also helping him find his path for the future.

After being assigned to a job in cybersystems operations, Ryan found a new direction in college. "Before I joined the Guard I was undecided. I got so much training from the Air Force, and that's how I chose my major," he says.

Ryan is now pursuing a degree in computer information systems, and a minor in criminology; a valuable combination in this age of cyberterrorism. "Coming out of tech school I had close to 40 credits I could put toward my college degree," Ryan says.

"That knocked off about a year of college for me, saving me a lot of money."

"Since I'm in the Guard I also have a full civilian life," Ryan says. "So I figured whatever training I got in the Guard I could use in the civilian sector, and IT (information technology) is where it's at."



Ryan studies for exams at his school's library.



Ryan monitors communication networks on base to ensure they are running properly.



"I figured whatever training I got in the Guard I could use in the civilian sector, and IT is where it's at."

— Air National Guard Senior Airman Ryan Holley

DAILY DUTIES + DOWNTIME

More than 50,000 young people are going to college with the help of ROTC scholarships. Once they get to campus they balance academics and military training with living the life of a normal student. See what a typical day is like for a ROTC cadet.



6:00A.M.

An average day for Dionne and her fellow ROTC cadets begins with Physical Training, also known as PT.



4:00P.M.

After lab Dionne finishes her homework. "I love my major. Art is my passion," she says. "But my finance studies are a great complement. If I have my own art studio, then I'll know how to run my business."



FOR ARMY NATIONAL GUARDSMAN + ROTC CADET DIONNE HENLEY,

her second college experience is very different from her first. Dionne went to college right out of high school, but took a break after two years. When she was planning to return she looked to the ROTC program to help her pay for school, but she found more than financial assistance.

“When I got back to college, my grades skyrocketed,” Dionne says. “I had a renewed sense of purpose. When I first arrived at college, I could never picture myself graduating before. Today, not only can I see myself graduating; I’m almost there.”

Dionne says the ROTC program helped her with time management and priorities. “School comes first. I work hard and play hard, but you have to make sure you get your ducks in a row before you go out and have fun.”



9:30A.M.

One day each week Dionne attends ROTC classes in uniform; other days she wears her own civilian clothes. “Today we talked about terrorism and how that impacts the way we do our jobs and how we train our soldiers,” she says.



2:00P.M.

As an upperclassman, Dionne trains younger cadets during their ROTC lab to learn skills such as first aid. “I know what it’s like to need a mentor, to need help finding direction, and it’s important to get that from a positive source,” she says.

7:00P.M.

After she completes her schoolwork, the self-described “girly-girl” hangs out with friends. “Just because you wear a uniform doesn’t mean you can’t embrace your feminine side, in the appropriate way,” Dionne says.



8:30P.M.

One of the things Dionne likes to do in her free time is sing karaoke with her friends. “I have a good balance of ROTC friends and regular friends,” she says.



**RE-
DEFINING
NINE
TO
FIVE**

Service members leave the desks behind, go to great depths and hit all the right notes

➤ Nick tests sonar equipment in a training pool at a military testing facility in San Diego.

“MY JOB IS JUST A NORMAL JOB, BUT A REALLY GREAT JOB WITH A LOT OF GREAT BENEFITS.”

— Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Raducha



LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Raducha spends most of his time in a wetsuit, not in a uniform. As a Navy diver stationed in San Diego, Nick is trained in a variety of diving techniques, including scuba and underwater mechanical repair. For a Navy diver, “going to work” can mean diving below ships, changing blades, patching holes or helping to facilitate the research and development of military technology.

“Diving is so diverse; there are so many aspects of the job that it’s unbelievable,” Nick says. “I’m a diver, but there are five or six categories of diving, so you have to learn it, study it and get really good at it.”

“Some people still see the Military as a last resort, but for me, the decision came down to all the opportunities that would be available to me,” Nick says.

“IN MARINE SCIENCE TECHNICIAN TRAINING SCHOOL YOU HEAR ABOUT THESE BIG OIL SPILLS, LIKE EXXON VALDEZ. DEEPWATER HORIZON IS WHAT FUTURE TECHNICIANS ARE GOING TO STUDY, AND I WAS THERE.

— Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Rebecca Shelly



Rebecca inspects a water sample for pollutants (left) and inspects waterfront facilities and containers (right).



CLEANING UP TOMORROW

Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Rebecca Shelly, a marine science technician (MST), works in the Service's Sector Baltimore Incident Management Division. "I'm involved in pollution response and pollution investigations. We do harbor patrols and monitor cleanup if there's an oil spill," she explains.

On a typical day, Rebecca and her team react to reports from the National Response Center.

"That could be inspecting a sunken vessel or oil spilling out of an outfall or a mystery drum found floating in the water," Rebecca says. "We work to determine who the responsible party for the incident is. Then we ensure it gets cleaned up."


Rebecca's most rewarding experience as a pollution responder was when she received orders to Slidell, La., after the infamous Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010.

"I was doing everything from going out with the contractors on their boats to cleaning up tarballs and monitoring where they were coming in from," Rebecca says.

Seeing the effects of the oil spill from the shore was upsetting for Rebecca. "I grew up on the water, so it was just sad to see all of those tarballs," she explains. "And it was crazy to think we were in this area that wasn't really near where the accident

happened, but everywhere was getting impacted."

Although Deepwater Horizon was a tragedy, Rebecca is proud to have done her part to rectify the devastation. "It was rewarding to be down there doing important work. And it was rewarding to be a part of something the whole nation and the whole world knew about."



Thomas inspects equipment at the Washington Aqueduct, which produces 180 million gallons of water per day.

ENGINEERING HIS FUTURE

Army Capt. Thomas Ruo always wanted to be an engineer. "I loved math, and I wanted to do something that would be challenging," Thomas says. But even as an engineering major and ROTC cadet in college, he didn't know much about the Army Corps of Engineers. "When I heard that through the Corps I could work in a local district, and get firsthand professional experience while still in the Military, it seemed perfect," Thomas says.

Thomas is currently a project manager and mechanical engineer in the Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He's overseen diverse projects at a water treatment plant that provides clean drinking water for one million residents of the Washington, D.C., area and helped coordinate communication between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Corps during Hurricane Sandy.

"It's definitely been a broadening experience. I've had the chance to develop technical skills and network while still being a soldier," he says.



Jason speaks with a colleague (left) and prepares to vaccinate a fellow service member (right).



Rx FOR READINESS

Wyoming Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Creel, an aerospace medical technician, ensures members in his unit are in good health before mobilizing. He provides immunizations, performs bloodwork and evaluates service members' physical fitness to make sure they're ready and able to defend the United States.

Jason's most rewarding experience took place during an airborne mission from Ramstein Air Base in Germany back home to the U.S. "My unit was on a mission to bring back 50 injured service members. It was my first experience with patients. It really made me grow up and helped me realize how important my

job is," he explains. "I was taking care of people and I was helping to bring them home to their families."

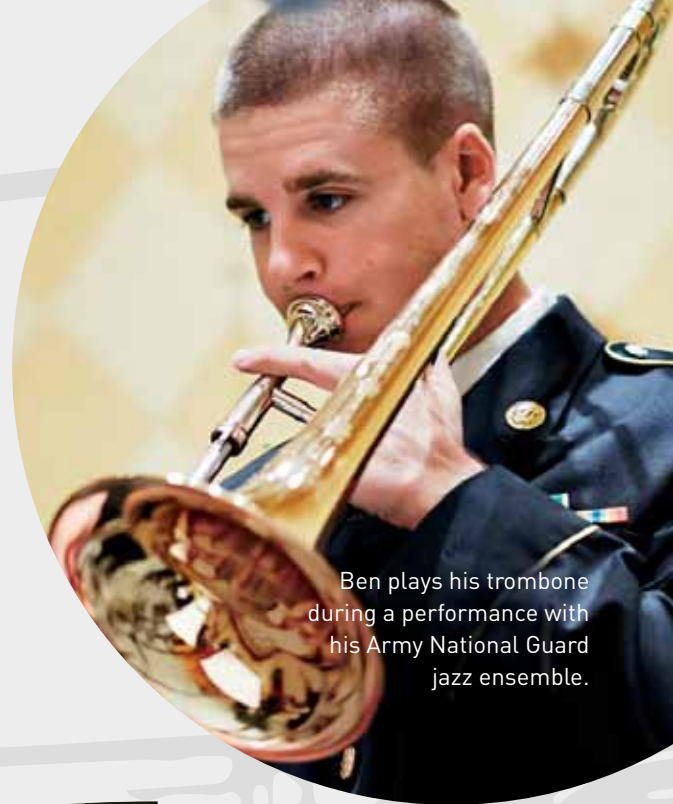
"My job is cool because I get to take care of the guys who are taking care of us," Jason says. "That gives me an incredible sense of pride."

“MY JOB IS COOL BECAUSE I GET TO TAKE CARE OF THE GUYS WHO ARE TAKING CARE OF US.”

— Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Creel

MAKING MUSIC

As a bandsman in the Army National Guard, Spc. Ben Peterson spends his drill weekends jamming. Ben plays the trombone and sings in several military ensembles, performing at both public and military events across Texas. For someone who's loved music and singing since childhood, Ben is thankful he can continue playing and performing as an adult.



Ben plays his trombone during a performance with his Army National Guard jazz ensemble.

“I WOULD NEVER BE AS GOOD A MUSICIAN IF I WASN'T IN THE MILITARY.”

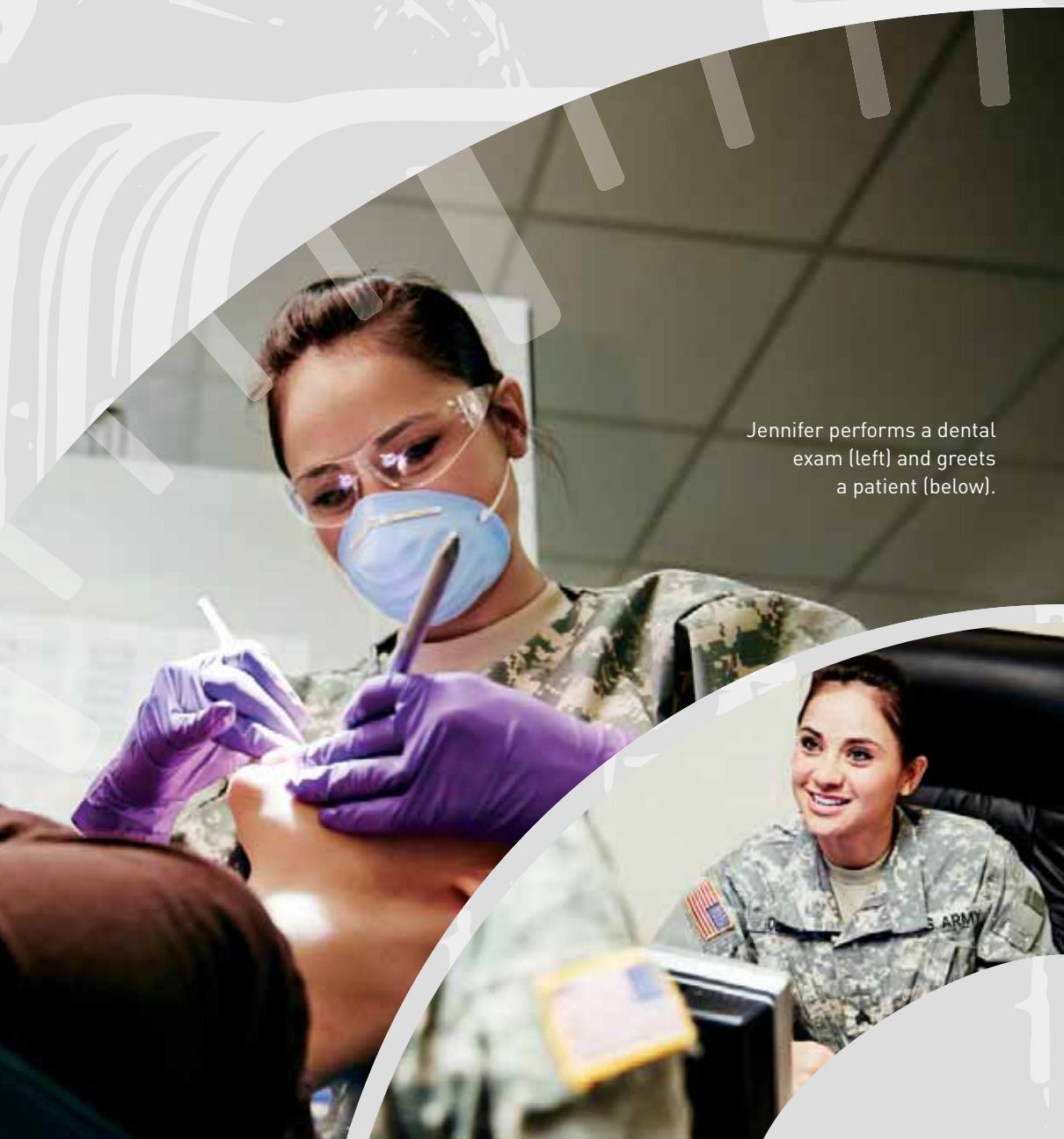
— Army National Guard Spc. Ben Peterson

HELPING HANDS

As a dental hygienist in the Army Reserve, Sgt. Jennifer DeMelo mainly works with military patients at the Camp Shelby Soldier Readiness Processing station in Hattiesburg, Miss., but her favorite experience was when her unit was assigned to a humanitarian mission in McGehee, Ark.

“We provided all types of medical care, everything from dentistry to optometry,” Jennifer explains. “And it was all at no cost to these civilian patients.”

“I was proud of helping people who didn't have anything,” Jennifer says. “It was really emotional, but at the same time it was something that made me proud. They made us feel so welcome and so appreciated. It just felt good.”



Jennifer performs a dental exam (left) and greets a patient (below).



make an

IMPACT

SEE HOW FOUR YOUNG PEOPLE FIND MEANING THROUGH SERVICE, WHILE DEFINING WHAT SERVICE MEANS TO THEM.

In college, Army Reserve 1st Lt. Alec Augustine-Marceil was an international relations major and Army ROTC cadet. He wanted to give back even then. “In other people’s judgment, I was probably the least likely to join the Military, but I always had a strong ethic of service,” he says. “I was a scrawny, nerdy kid, but I knew I had something to contribute.”

After graduation he commissioned in the Army Reserve and became a civil affairs officer, which he describes as a “warrior-diplomat.” He deployed to Afghanistan, where his duties included helping restore government functions

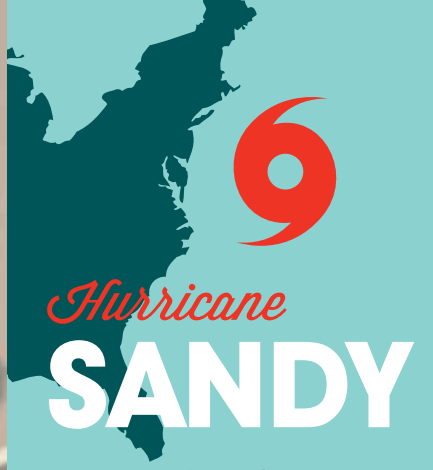
like running water to villages and serving as liaison between the U.S. Military and local government leaders.

“There were some things in the Army I was not cut out for,” Alec explains. “But I knew in this role I’d have a great time and be able to make a greater contribution than I’d be able to in another role.”

After Alec’s deployment he returned home and is currently working at a technology solutions company in Washington, D.C. “I was hired because I love to solve problems,” he says, “whether it’s making a budget work or building an agenda for an Afghanistan provisional council meeting.”

“I was A SCRAWNY, NERDY KID, BUT I KNEW I HAD SOMETHING TO CONTRIBUTE.”

— ARMY RESERVE 1ST LT. ALEC AUGUSTINE-MARCEIL



When Hurricane Sandy struck the East Coast of the U.S. in October 2012, it killed nearly 80 people, destroyed thousands of homes and caused over \$70 billion in damage. In addition to first responders, members of the Military were called upon — and volunteered — to help their fellow Americans.

Through a group called Team Rubicon, Alec and other volunteers, many of them veterans, traveled to the Rockaways section of Queens in New York City and set up a command center to field and organize residents' requests for help. "We created programs and solutions so the residents could help themselves," he says.

"I was shocked we could have problems that big in the U.S.," Alec says. "I was used to those levels of problems in Afghanistan, but not in New York City. It made me sad, but it also made me happy I was able to help."

As a civil affairs officer, Alec (second from left, above) worked with tribal leaders and local Afghans on infrastructure projects such as repairing wells. While volunteering in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Alec (right, center) explains the process of inputting resident needs and requests to fellow volunteers in the Rockaways in New York City.



Photo courtesy of Thomas Hudson



TWO BEATS *one* PASSION

“Service has always powered me,” explains Coast Guard Reserve Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicole Evans. She gives back in nearly every aspect of her life and wouldn’t have it any other way.

In her civilian career, Nicole is a member of the Los Angeles Police Department and her beat is the rough neighborhood of South Central LA. There, she can see the immediate impact of her work, helping people through the toughest times of their lives. Nicole has seen children in situations that were less than ideal, so she and other officers created an after-school cadet program for children and teens in the neighborhood.

“It’s very rewarding because instead of putting them in the back of my police car, I get time to work with them and help them so they’ll never end up there,” Nicole says. “I know I have done the best I could, before I have to make any arrests.”

Two years ago, Nicole took her service to the next level when she joined the Coast Guard Reserve as part of a Port Security Unit. When she’s on duty she maintains the safety and security of the Port of Los Angeles by manning the weapons on Coast Guard vessels. “We keep the port and all the people and vessels in it safe.”

“My civilian career is complemented by my military training,” Nicole says. She admits she puts in long days between her civilian career, volunteering and her military duties, but she says it is exhilarating, not exhausting. “I get so excited for my missions, and feel so much camaraderie with my shipmates,” she says. “This is the right thing to do. I have a lot to give back.”

“My civilian CAREER IS COMPLEMENTED BY MY MILITARY TRAINING.*”*

— PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS NICOLE EVANS



➤ In Nicole's civilian career, she is a Los Angeles Police Officer. She serves as a mentor to young people in the community through an after-school program that she created with fellow officers (far left), and patrols the streets of South Central LA (left). When on duty, Nicole patrols Los Angeles Harbor with her Coast Guard Port Security Unit (right).

SADDLING *up* & HELPING *out*

EVEN WHEN OUT OF UNIFORM, SERVICE MEMBERS MAKE MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCES IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

When she's not protecting and preserving coastal waters from pollutants, Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Rebecca Shelly continues to give back.

Rebecca lives on a horse farm, where she volunteers as a therapeutic riding instructor for children with special needs. "The rides build kids' confidence, and in some cases, strengthen muscles," she says.

The children aren't the only ones who benefit from the therapeutic

rides. Rebecca has formed meaningful bonds with her students and enjoys seeing them grow more self-assured. "There were kids who weren't really riding on their own when I first started, and now they are trotting around the ring by themselves. I also have a student who never used to speak, but now that she's comfortable she's turned into a chatterbox. It's fun to see that. It's really rewarding."



Rebecca (left) guides a young student on a therapeutic horseback ride, while Tavaris (right) sorts toys at a Toys for Tots drop-off center in Virginia.



“It’s a great **FEELING,**
BUT I ALWAYS TELL PEOPLE,
‘DON’T BE LIKE ME, BE
BETTER THAN ME.’ ”

— MARINE CORPS SGT. TAVARIS DOUGLAS

Marine Corps Sgt. Tavaris Douglas understands firsthand the power of giving back.

In addition to helping his fellow Marines prepare for their physical fitness exams, he also represents the Marine Corps and gives back to his community through his involvement in Toys for Tots.

Four years ago, Tavaris went to a Toys for Tots event with his friend and immediately decided to get involved. “It just felt so good to see these little kids get toys for Christmas, to see the smiles on their faces,” he says.

Tavaris helps organize the events, from collecting toys to hosting tree lightings. “We get to show the community that we’re not just about fighting; we’re also making a difference,” Tavaris says.

“I explain my job to people, and all the places I’ve traveled around the world, and sometimes they say they may want to do what I do. It’s a great feeling,” he says. “But I always tell people, ‘Don’t be like me, be better than me.’”

WORK

or



*THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF DIVERSE
JOBS AVAILABLE IN THE MILITARY,
MANY THAT YOU MAY NOT EXPECT.
SEE HOW ONE SERVICE MEMBER
TURNED HIS LOVE OF ADVENTURE
INTO A CAREER.*



■ Kelvin shows off his skydiving skills high above San Diego.

“

I'm absolutely an adrenaline junkie," admits Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelvin Kolb. As a rescue swimmer, Kelvin's duties include everything from airborne firefighting to search and rescue missions. When off duty, he enjoys similar heart-pumping activities such as skydiving and mountain biking.

"I'm a certified skydiver," Kelvin explains. "I love to be outdoors and I love the adrenaline rush. I learn something new with each jump. Plus I never get bored."

While considering whether to join the Military, Kelvin had many questions, but there was one thing he knew for sure: "I didn't want to sit behind a desk," he says. "I wanted to do something exciting." When he heard that as a rescue swimmer he could jump out of

helicopters and save people, he remembers saying, "Well, that sounds pretty perfect."

Rescuing people from dangerous situations has had a big impact on Kelvin. "Being able to help people is the best part of my job," he says. "Knowing that you have a chance to make a difference in someone's life is very humbling."

In addition to his mid-air duties, Kelvin also helps train younger rescue swimmers. "It feels good to help these Sailors," he says. "You have to be in a different mindset to help people, but I remember being in their shoes. I remember my instructors taking the time to teach me and what that meant, so it ends up being incredibly rewarding."

■ Kelvin instructs younger divers on lifesaving techniques during a pool training session.





**“I DEFINITELY
HAVE ONE OF
THE BEST JOBS
IN THE NAVY.”**

— NAVY PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS KELVIN KOLB

■ Kelvin, a certified skydiver, enjoys the view from thousands of feet in the air (above) and mountain bikes (below) in San Diego.



Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Raducha prepares to catch a wave in San Diego.

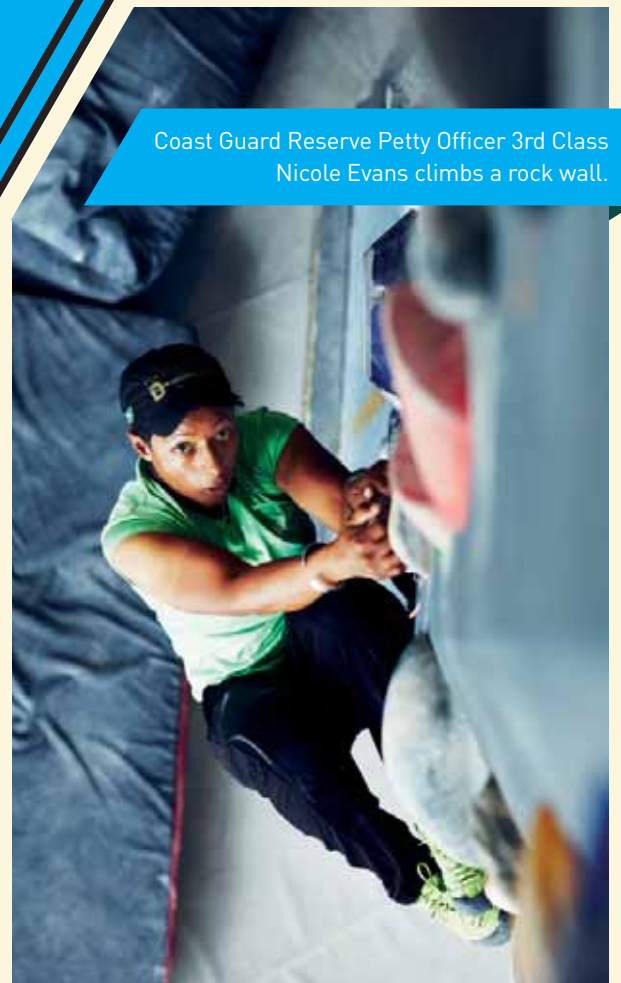


Run
CLIMB
PLAY
★ ★ ★ ★

Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Creel snowshoes near Cheyenne, Wyo.



Coast Guard Reserve Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicole Evans climbs a rock wall.



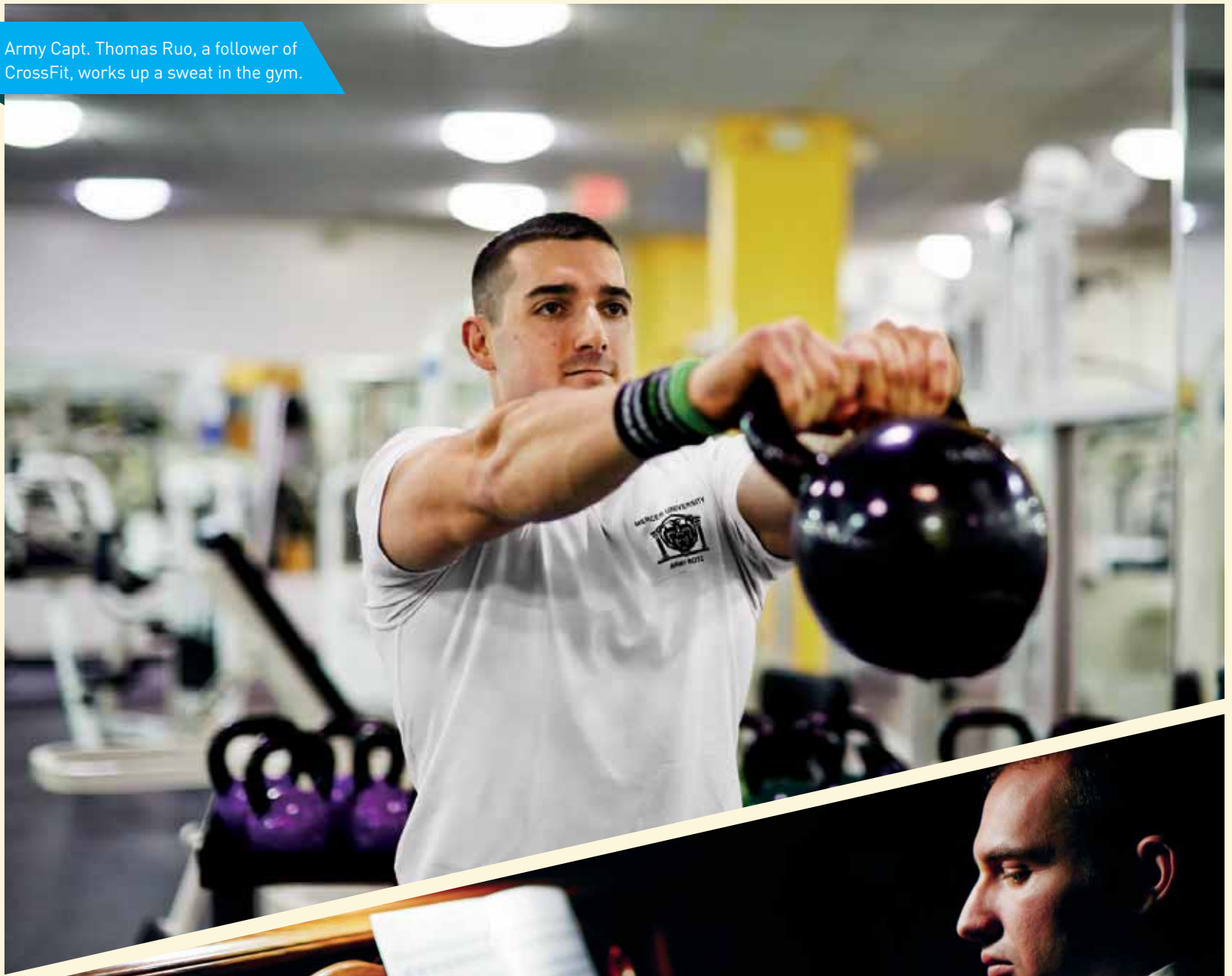
JUST LIKE YOU,
SERVICE MEMBERS
HAVE HOBBIES
AND ACTIVITIES
THEY LOVE.

THEY SPEND THEIR
NIGHTS, WEEKENDS
AND VACATIONS
ON BEACHES, AT
THE GYM AND
EVEN ONSTAGE.

Air National Guard Senior Airman Ryan Holley plays soccer with friends from his college's club soccer team.

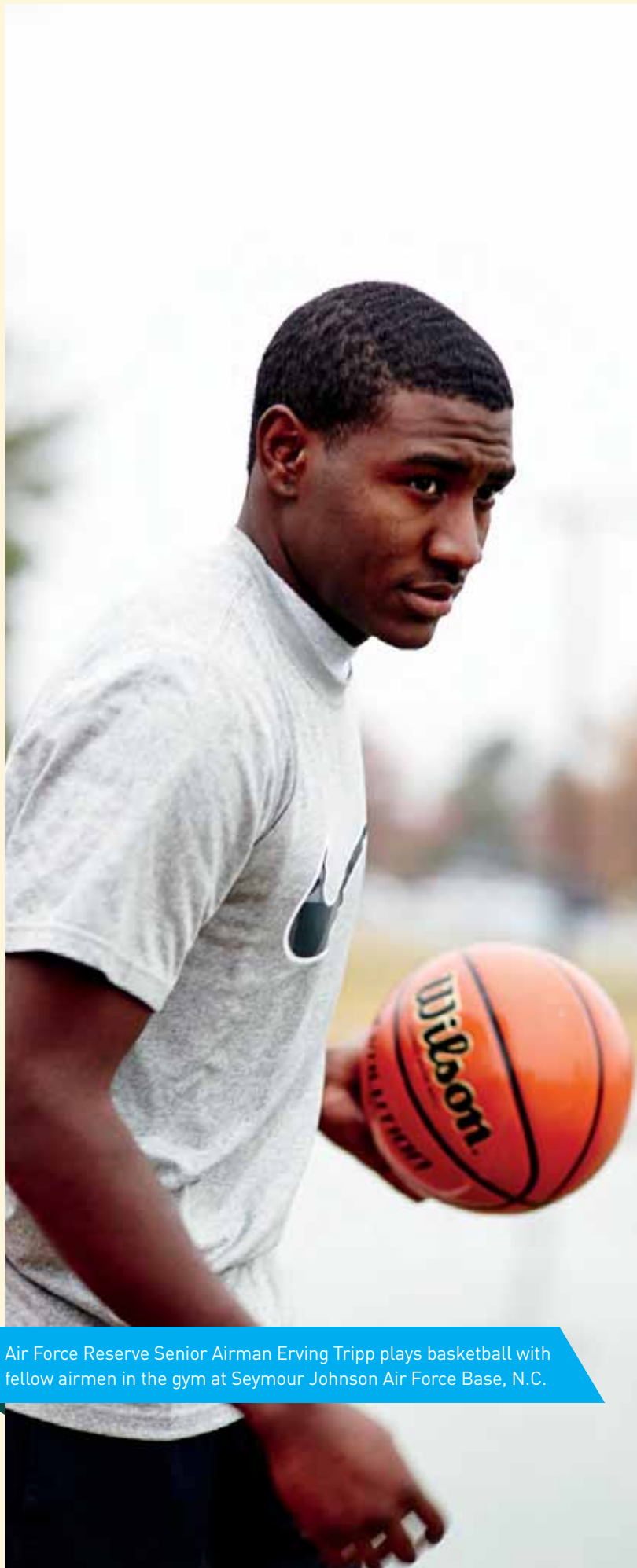


Army Capt. Thomas Ruo, a follower of CrossFit, works up a sweat in the gym.



Air Force 1st Lt. August DeRosa practices piano after a day at work.





Air Force Reserve Senior Airman Erving Tripp plays basketball with fellow airmen in the gym at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

Army Reserve Sgt. Jennifer DeMelo, the reigning Miss William Carey University, practices her pageant talent: salsa dancing.





A TEAM AT 10,000 FT

AT

MEGGAN PURKETT

AUGUST

◀◀ EVERY NOW AND THEN WE SIT UP IN THE COCKPIT AND WE TAKE A
BREAK AND LOOK BEHIND US TO SEE THAT WE ARE ON THE TIP OF A
NEEDLE ON THE EDGE OF HEAVEN, LOOKING DOWN. ▶▶

— AIR FORCE 1ST LT. AUGUST DEROSA



August and Meggan walk the flight line at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., (above) and get into the cockpit of an F-15E Strike Eagle (below).

F

or Air Force Lieutenants August DeRosa and Meggan Purkett, teamwork is part of the job description. August, a fighter pilot, and Meggan, a weapon systems officer (WSO), play different roles within an F-15E fighter jet to achieve the same goal: locate and neutralize targets.

“My responsibility is to maneuver the jet, get off and back onto the ground safely and maintain overarching situational awareness outside the aircraft,” August explains. And from the seat right behind him in the jet, Meggan uses radars, sensors and other tools to identify enemy targets, both in the air and on the ground. She then provides the target’s coordinates for the pilot to release weapons. “The pilot’s the one doing the actual pickling — dropping of the weapons — but I’m the one finding the target,” Meggan says.

To be successful, fighter pilots and WSOs must work together as a team. “When one person is looking left, the other person is looking right. When one person is looking

outside, the other person is looking inside. We’re always backing each other up. We’re always covering every aspect of the jet in order to work efficiently.”

There’s a bond that pilots and WSOs develop, not just from working together, but from the mid-air environment they share. “One time, we were above the cloud line and the clouds broke for just a second and I looked down. I thought, ‘It’s sunny and beautiful up here, and down there it’s cold, rainy. We’re in two different worlds.’ Flying is unlike anything on this earth,” August says.

Meggan agrees. “There are days where it’s just so cold and depressing on the ground, but once you get through that layer of clouds it’s just beautiful. Your whole mood changes when you get up there.”



**“I’VE FOUND MYSELF
SURROUNDED BY BETTER PEOPLE
AFTER JOINING THE MILITARY
AND I’VE BECOME BETTER, TOO.
I NEVER KNEW WHAT
I WAS CAPABLE OF. NOW I DO.”**

— AIR FORCE RESERVE SENIOR AIRMAN ERVING TRIPP





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