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Prescott duo assist with vehicle rollover rescue



PRESCOTT VALLEY, Ariz. – Sgt. 1st Class Matt Vinson doesn't consider himself a hero. He did what he said was the right thing to do.

When Vinson and 1st Lt. Lewis Jackson, both of Phoenix North Recruiting Battalion, saw an overturned SUV on March 20, they both immediately leapt into action, realizing the imminent danger.

“We had just left Anytime Fitness gym in Prescott Valley at around 7 in the morning. We were on our way to my house and noticed an SUV had rolled and landed on the passenger side with two occupants,” said Vinson, station commander, Prescott Recruiting Station “We noticed liquid was coming from the vehicle, so I parked my truck 50 meters away. Jackson and I grabbed our medical bags and dismounted the truck and ran up to the vehicle to assess the casualties/passengers in the vehicle.” *(continued on next page)*

Prescott duo assist with vehicle rollover rescue (cont.)

Vinson observed a line of vehicles, with people observing the crash, but doing little to assist.

"There was a line of 10 vehicles backed up, with only two people who got out to observe," he said. "No one approached the vehicle to assess the casualties and help."

As Jackson assessed the traffic situation and asked observers what had occurred, Vinson ran to the vehicle in a desperate attempt to help those trapped inside.

"I ran up to the flipped vehicle, leaned in over the driver side and assessed the older man and his wife," Vinson recalled. "Both were stuck in their seat belts and immediately requested to be extracted from the vehicle."

Before making any decision to try and extract them from the vehicle, Vinson said he assessed their medical conditions, which appeared to be non-life threatening.

"I talked them through assessing themselves for bleeding. They checked under their bodies and legs and there was nothing evident," Vinson continued. "I assured them everything was okay, help was on the way and they needed to remain calm as the sirens approached."

Vinson still recognized the need for urgent assistance before the arrival of emergency services, he said.

"I assisted with relieving some pressure off the seat belt, as the man was still stuck in the driver seat in his seat belt, which was causing pressure on his chest and stomach," Vinson explained. "I decided not to use my trauma shears to cut the seat belt because it would have released him and he would have fallen into his wife in the passenger seat."

When the police and fire department arrived, Vinson passed the situation off to them and explained what he and Jackson had managed to achieve.

"We told them what we knew as they approached, which enabled them to assess the accident easier without having to go through their casualty assessment SOP (standard operating procedure), Vinson said. "I moved my truck from behind the vehicle so the fire department could use their rig to flip the vehicle. As soon as the fire fighters showed up, they removed the windshield of the flipped vehicle and extracted both of the occupants."

Reflecting on the incident, Jackson, executive officer, Phoenix North Recruiting Company, said both he and Vinson share a similar mindset in being prepared to act in the case of an emergency.

"It doesn't matter if you're in uniform completing a duty or in your off time, wasted seconds can lead to an escalation of a negative situation," Jackson said. "As a military policeman, I've been fortunate to receive some of the best training that the Army has to offer, but that's not what is always required."

"I always advise people to take a first aid course, carry a first aid kit at a minimum ... there's courses available for free. If all else fails, do something, because someone's life may depend on it," Jackson said.

Vinson said he and Jackson were undeterred by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

"Why did we do it? Because it was the right thing to do," Vinson said.

From professional baseball to U.S. Army

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix



Sgt. 1st Class Jared Siple (left), recruiter, Buckeye Recruiting Station, Phoenix West Recruiting Company, poses with Salomon Manriquez, Feb. 13, Glendale Recruiting Station, Glendale, Ariz. Manriquez, a native of Valencia, Venezuela, is a former professional baseball player, who spent 13 years as a catcher for various minor league teams, before deciding to enlist in the U.S. Army at the age of 37. Siple helped him enlist into the Army after the pair became friends two years ago. (U.S. Army Photo by Alun Thomas, USAREC Public Affairs)

GLENDALE, Ariz. – The road seemed endless, the challenges always fierce.

Year after year, a new team and new location, as Salomon Manriquez fought his way through a 13 year minor league baseball career, taking him to every reach of the United States.

As a catcher Manriquez, a Venezuelan native, stayed on top of his game, training endlessly, performing to the best of his abilities, in his quest to make the major leagues.

Eventually he had to retire, having given everything in a career that took him to over 15 teams and Spain's

national team at the World Baseball Classic in 2013.

At the age of 37, seeking a change in his life and looking for new purpose and direction, Salomon enlisted in the U.S. Army in Jan. 2019.

Familiar with the concept of change, Salomon has prepared himself and his family for a new adventure, one all of them are eager to begin as he departed for Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, S.C., Feb. 18.

Manriquez's many traverses began in 1982, when he was born in Valencia, Venezuela, enjoying his childhood in the South American environment.

"I actually grew up in a little area outside Valencia, but I moved to the main city after ***(continued next page)***

From professional baseball to U.S. Army (cont.)



Salomon Manriquez (center) poses with his wife Lori and son Kevin, shortly after swearing in to the U.S. Army at the Phoenix Military Entrance Processing Station, Jan. 3. Manriquez, a native of Valencia, Venezuela, is a former professional baseball player, who spent 13 years as a catcher for various minor league teams, before deciding to enlist in the U.S. Army at the age of 37. (Courtesy Photo)

but I moved to the main city after I signed my first professional baseball contract,” Manriquez said. “There I had access to better facilities to work out and healthier nutrition options.”

Although the country finds itself in a tumultuous state presently, Manriquez said it was a paradise to grow up in during the 1980’s and 90’s.

“Growing up in Venezuela was a lot different than it is there now. The country was beautiful, I had a good childhood and I was always happy,” he said. “My parents owned their own business, which was in the engineering field. I have a brother and sister, of which I’m the oldest of. We didn’t always have much, but we were happy and always got by.”

At an early age Manriquez often thought about his dream job, which would one day become a reality.

“When I was a kid I always wanted to be a firefighter. But when I was in the first grade, one of my friends said he wanted to be a professional soccer player. I was young and didn’t know you could do that and get paid for it,” Manriquez explained. “I asked my teacher and she said ‘of course you can.’ But I wanted to be a baseball player, even when I was just seven years old.” ***(continued next page)***

From professional baseball to U.S. Army (cont.)

With this goal in mind, Manriquez devoted himself to becoming the best baseball player possible, even though many of those around him had their doubts.

“Even though I wasn’t very good at first, I pushed myself and worked hard. By the age of 16 I signed my first contract with the Montreal Expos,” Manriquez said. “Even back then I was fighting to prove myself. People didn’t believe that I was going to sign with them. Even when I did, there was people who thought I’d get released quickly. But I lasted 13 years.”

From that moment on in 1999, Manriquez’s life became a whirlwind, as he spent the next 13 years following a baseball dream, accompanied by his wife Lori, whom he married in 2002, having known each other since elementary school.

“We were married when I was 20 years old. We first met in elementary school and have been together almost the whole time since we left high school,” he explained. “It’s been fun. She’s my best friend and I couldn’t have done any of this without her.”

“She knows the grind of the baseball life and has lived it over the last 20 years. My son Kevin was born in 2011 and lived a part of it as well,” he said. “They’ve both been warriors through it all.”

Manriquez’s career took him all over the U.S., as he pursued his major league ambitions, with some hurdles to overcome along the way.

“I played for some minor league teams under the Expos and Washington Nationals. Then in 2006 I got signed in a three way trade to the Colorado Rockies and then the Texas Rangers, both on the same day,” Manriquez recalled. “My agent was always looking for a better offer, so I bounced around teams a lot. In 2009 I was with the (New York) Mets organization when the Atlanta Braves said they wanted to sign me. Then they decided to sign someone else and for the first time I was without a job.”

Manriquez quickly got back on his feet.

“I resigned with the Mets and went back to Triple-A in 2011. By this time it was becoming a grind, even though it had been a fun ride so far,” Manriquez said. “Unfortunately I never reached my objective of getting to the top, which was playing in the big leagues (Major League Baseball). But I made it to Triple-A.”

Lori Manriquez agreed that life as a baseball spouse could be grueling, but she was always determined to stand by her husband.

“It was very hard. We were moving every six months and having to pack everything up,” Lori said. “We moved all around the country and the teams wouldn’t help with the moves, we did it all ourselves.”

“We’ve been together the whole time, through everything he’s done. I’m happy to be part of his life. He’s an excellent husband and excellent father,” she continued.

Manriquez retired in 2013 as part of the Camden Riversharks, amassing over 1050 games in his career as a catcher, with 88 home runs and 439 runs batted in. After years spent on the East Coast playing for teams such as the Binghamton Mets and Buffalo Bisons, he settled in Surprise, Arizona, upon retirement, as a coach for the Arizona League Rangers. ***(continued next page)***

From professional baseball to U.S. Army (cont.)

While coaching in Surprise, Manriquez formed a friendship with Sgt. 1st Class Jared Siple, recruiter, Buckeye Recruiting Station, Phoenix West Recruiting Company, with both men's sons in the same swimming team.

"We met each other at Surprise Recreation Center where our sons swam together. I'd been coaching for the Texas Rangers in Surprise, where they have a minor league team. So we started talking and both our wives became friends too," Manriquez said. "I started asking questions about the Army, but I don't think he (Siple) thought I was actually serious about it, until one day I told him I was going to join the Army."

Siple was surprised to hear this from Manriquez, not expecting him to pursue the Army as a career choice.

"About seven months ago he first expressed his desire to join the Army. When he first said that I took a step back. When you consider what he's achieved and being a baseball player of his stature, I wasn't expecting that," Siple said. "But I told him I'd have to check into the age waiver and he accepted that. He did everything I asked of him and he told me 'fail to prepare, prepare to fail.' That's become one of my favorite sayings."

Manriquez said his wife was also initially surprised by his decision to enlist.

"I don't think my wife believed me when I said I was going to join. She told me to stop messing around and wasting my time. When she realized I was serious, we talked about it and she agreed it was a great opportunity for me to grow and learn something different," he said. "I think all the skills I learned in baseball are similar to what you apply in the Army, leadership, physical and mental toughness, resilience ... all things required of a professional athlete."

Manriquez praised Siple for his assistance during the recruiting process, making sure he and his family were fully aware of the changes ahead.

"He was very patient with me ... I asked a million questions. Sometimes we agreed on things, other times we disagreed," he continued. "I appreciate his help through the entire process because at this point in my life I want to be 100 percent sure this is what I want to do. The support I have from him and his family is something I will always be grateful for."

Lori said she was hesitant at first also, but supports her husband's decision to enlist.

"I think it's exciting to be doing something new in our lives. I think it's going to be hard at first, but I'm excited for us to be part of the Army family. Moving every three years will be a lot easier than baseball was," she explained. "I'm a little bit scared, but I'm excited at the same time. It's a lot to take in, a much different way of life, but I know we will adapt."

Manriquez is eager to begin his Army career, having chosen a military occupational specialty of 15U, helicopter repairer.

"After that I might possibly pursue being a pilot, depending on my age and requirements of course. To me that's an exciting possibility," he said. "I want to do the things I've always dreamed of. At this point in my life it's now or never."

"Now I'm joining the Army and putting some excitement back into my life. The best is yet to come," Manriquez smiled.

Prescott resident becomes regions first female infantry recruit

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix

PRESCOTT VALLEY, Ariz. – A simple phone call was all the spark needed for Sarah Dugan to change her life.

At the age of 29, Dugan had yet to find a true path, married with two children and finding her ambitions not fully realized. This caused her to question her future – time was running out to find a purpose and make her mark in life.

Then in Nov. 2018, she received a phone call from Prescott Recruiting Station, asking her if she would be interested in opportunities with the U.S. Army.

Dugan said she was.

Just 3 months later she had enlisted in the Army, signing up to become an infantryman and attend Airborne School, the first female in Northern Arizona to select the 11B military occupational specialty.

For Dugan the path to the Army had been a long one. A native of Little Rock, Ark., Dugan moved around the country frequently as a youngster with her single mother

"When my parents divorced I moved to Maine with my mother, where she was originally from," Dugan said. "Things could be challenging in a single-parent household, but we managed to get by."

Things got more challenging for Dugan however, when she found herself pregnant at the age of 16, before getting married and dropping out of high school.

"I had to grow up pretty quickly ... everything was coming at me fast," Dugan said. "I didn't let it define my life though and I tried to stay positive. I knew I could still go on to achieve significant things in my life."

Eventually Dugan got divorced and moved to Prescott, hoping to jumpstart her life. She ended up meeting her current husband Nathan, with whom she had a daughter, Ava, 9, in addition to her son, Michael, 12.

"My husband helped me get back on the right track and was very supportive," Dugan said. "He encouraged me to go back to school and do everything I needed to for my education."



Sarah Dugan, 29, performs an iron mike at Future Soldier training, Jan. 30, Prescott Recruiting Station, Prescott Valley, Ariz. (U.S. Army Photo by Alun Thomas,

Dugan did just that, obtaining her high school diploma and attending beauty school, before suffering another setback.

"The beauty school closed down, so I didn't get to finish my degree there which was very disappointing," she said. "I had spent a lot of time and money doing that."

Dugan started taking classes at Yavapai College in Prescott Valley for a nursing degree, when she received a call from Staff Sgt. Anderson Tejada, recruiter, Prescott Recruiting Station, Phoenix North Recruiting Company.

"He had gotten my number from a list and called me to discuss the Army. I told him I was a little old at 29 and had two kids, but he said that's ok, there's plenty of opportunities for you," Dugan said. "He explained the benefits, including the G.I. Bill, paid college tuition and medical coverage. I told him I was interested and would come in to talk." **(continued next page)**

Prescott resident becomes regions first female infantry recruit

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix



Sarah Dugan and Staff Sgt. Jonathon Johnson (both left), recruiter, Prescott Recruiting Station, Phoenix North Recruiting Company, listen to Sgt. 1st Class Matt Vinson (right), station commander, Prescott Recruiting Station, prior

Upon meeting Tejada, he gave Dugan an idea of the 150 job choices the Army offers. Dugan said she wanted a job with some type of action and challenge, initially focusing on medical fields.

Eventually though she zeroed in on infantry and airborne, deciding to challenge herself in the most punishing manner.

“Everything about the infantry appeals to me ... the history behind it, the teamwork, but most of all the challenge,” she continued. “I know it will push me, but I’m making sure I’m prepared.”

With a ship date of March 23 to Basic Combat Training at Fort Benning, Ga., Dugan said she is getting nervous anticipating the 22 week course, but receiving lots of support from her family.

“They’re behind me every step of the way and fully support my decision to enlist,” Dugan said. “I’ve been working out every day to get into shape and my sons are always there cheering me on.”

Dugan said more than anything, she wants to prove to herself she can be successful and overcome the hurdles at basic training.

“I’m happy to be an inspiration for other women who decide to do this, but I’m determined to do it for myself,” Dugan said. “I want to prove it can be done and the hard work will pay off.”

West Point ambition becomes reality for Glendale native

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix

SURPRISE, Ariz. – Once Brian Lunn made his mind up, there was no looking back.

It was West Point or nothing, Brian deciding early on in his life that he wanted to attend the historic military academy in New York.

The road to admission as a cadet was a long one – almost two years – finally coming to fruition in Feb., when Brian received notification he was accepted to attend the prestigious school, where he will spend four years before being commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army.

Brian’s journey to West Point began in earnest during his middle-school years, when he had the chance to visit the academy while on a trip to New York.

“Around the second or third grade, I went on a cross-country road trip with my family and one of the places we stopped was West Point. My dad was in the pipe band when he was a police officer in New York and they would do shows at West Point,” Brian explained. “Something rubbed off on me while I was visiting there and I started thinking, ‘is attending West Point’ something that’s possible?”

The possibility of one-day attending West Point suddenly became consuming for Brian, as he developed a work ethic that would prove the launching pad for the rigorous application process ahead.

“For me school always came first. Once I started becoming more serious about attending West Point during my middle school years, it started to become a more realistic target,” Brian, a Glendale, Ariz. native, said. “I was building a work ethic. By high school, it had become my goal. It was a natural progression.”

Brian’s first contact with the Army came through Staff Sgt. Steven Hutchins, recruiter, Surprise Recruiting Station, when Brian was commander of the law enforcement class at Valley Vista High School.

“He (Staff Sgt. Hutchins) would come in every Thursday to work with the class and get acclimated with the students,” he said. “After a few weeks, he real-



Brian Lunn (center) displays his certificate of appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, along with his parents Cliff Lunn (left) and Chris Lunn (right), March 5, Surprise Recruiting Station, Surprise, Ariz. Lunn was recently accepted to attend West Point, following an intense application process that began in 2018. (U.S. Army Photo by Alun Thomas, USAREC Public Affairs)

ized I had interest in West Point, so he invited me to come out to Future Soldier training events at the recruiting station. I really enjoyed it, so I kept coming back.”

Immediately Hutchins saw something special in Brian, an observation that would eventually be realized.

“I knew right away when I met Brian in the law enforcement class that he had natural leadership ability. He would always come with questions and was very open to being taught anything. That’s the first thing you look for in a leader – someone who has the ability to be teachable,” Hutchins said. “He’s one of the most creative people I’ve met. He has the skill of being able to learn and teach others what he’s been taught.” **(continued next page)**

West Point ambition becomes reality for Glendale native (cont.)

Showing initiative, Brian worked on much of the application himself, trying to get a head start on the process and be as prepared as possible.

“The process definitely started in my junior year of high school. Getting my standardized tests done early was a good thing to do. That way I could improve on them if I didn’t do as well as I hoped,” Brian said.

“During the summer, I got a jump on my applications for the senators and congress people. Each one of those is an application in itself.”

As a traditional part of the application process, all candidates must go through a series of interviews with local senators and congress people. For Brian, that meant being interviewed by staff members from the offices of Sen. Martha McSally (R-AZ), Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Congresswoman Debbie Lesko (R-AZ).

“My first interview was with McSally’s board and it was definitely the hardest of the three, probably because it was my first one,” he continued. “The other two were far less formal and they asked me a lot about my plans and goals. The Future Soldier training I’d done helped me out greatly. They were very interested in the physical aspect of the training.”

“That was my last step in the application process. I had everything else done already. I ended up with nominations from Lesko and Sinema’s offices. I was also medically cleared, which a lot of people applying haven’t done at that point in the process,” Brian added.

Brian’s perseverance paid off however and in early Feb. he learned he had been selected to attend West Point.

“It was exciting for sure. My first notification was from Senator Sinema’s office. They called me during the school day and congratulated me on getting into West Point,” he said. “They thought I already knew, so it took me by surprise. I went home and checked and sure enough I had been accepted.”



Brian Lunn (center) displays his certificate of appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, along with his parents Cliff Lunn (left) and Chris Lunn (right), March 5, Surprise Recruiting Station, Surprise, Ariz. Lunn was recently accepted to attend West Point, following an intense application process that began in 2018. (U.S. Army Photo by Alun Thomas, USAREC Public Affairs)

Upon hearing the news, Cliff said he was overjoyed at seeing Brian’s dream become reality and is confident he will excel at West Point.

“Bryan has always been very strong in leadership roles. He was the commander of his law enforcement class and this year was the president of the school honor society. He’s also done a lot of volunteer work,” Cliff said. “He doesn’t like to brag about himself ... he’s very modest. We as parents love to brag. He’s never had any grade lower than an A. So I don’t know what it’s going to feel like when he gets a B.”

With just over three months until he commences his West Point journey, Brian said he’s doing his best to prepare, both physically and mentally.

“I’m trying to stick to the same routine I always have. It’s worked so far. It helps to know what to expect once I’m there, but I’m still nervous about that fear of the unknown,” Brian said.

With a long path ahead of him, Brian said it’s too early to think about a branch, but sees no reason not to make a career out of the Army.

Future Soldiers participate in historic NASA enlistment ceremony



Future Soldiers from Phoenix North Recruiting Company become part of history, as they participate in the first nationwide oath of enlistment ceremony from space, Feb. 26, Paradise Valley High School, Phoenix. The oath was administered from the International Space Station (ISS) by Col. Andrew Morgan, a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut and U.S. Army officer, and involved over 1000 Future Soldiers throughout the nation. (U.S. Army Photo by Alun Thomas, USAREC Public Affairs)

Station commander looks back on decade of service

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix



Staff Sgt. Krystal Wright (left), station commander, Foothills Recruiting Station, Tucson Recruiting Company, poses during a recruiting event at the University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz., in 2019. (Courtesy Photo)

TUCSON, Ariz. – Since she enlisted in the U.S. Army a decade ago, Staff Sgt. Krystal Wright has traveled extensively, with Hawaii, Alaska and Australia a few of the locations she has under her belt.

Now she finds herself back where it began, serving as a station commander for Tucson Recruiting Company – the same city she was born and raised in as a child, before enlisting there in March of 2010.

But Wright wouldn't have it any other way, as she continues to serve proudly, helping provide the Army with its next generation of Soldiers and leaders.

For Wright, station commander, Foothills Recruiting Station, her childhood was an active one, being the second youngest of seven children.

"I played a lot of sports, basketball was my ultimate sport. I always stayed as active as possible," Wright said. "I attended Cienega High School out in Vail, Arizona, from freshman year until junior year. I graduated 6 months early my senior year from Bisbee High School, when I moved down there to help out with my grandmother."

Wright found herself with bigger goals in mind, ones that involved the military. ***(continued on next page)***

Station commander looks back on decade of service (cont.)

"I'd always wanted to join the Army, to give back and be a part of something bigger than myself," she said. "My great aunt married someone that was serving in the Army and he completed 20 years in service, retiring as a CW3, other than that I do not have any immediate family members that have served. I was the first child in my family to join."

Wright was 22 years old when she shipped off to Basic Combat Training in Oct., 2010, beginning a journey she hasn't looked back from.

"My Army experience has been a blessing of opportunities afforded to me, things I know I would not have been able to do without serving," Wright explained. "My first assignment was in Hawaii with the 25th Infantry Division. I went on a lot of missions and worked with a lot of other military branches from other countries."

"I attended a multi-national mission in Brisbane, Australia, for a few weeks and was able to visit some of the visitor attractions when the mission was over, before returning to Hawaii. I ranked up pretty fast, came in as a private and made sergeant just before 3 years in service," Wright recalled.

With her pending reenlistment, Wright opted for the frozen tundra of Alaska as her next duty station, where she continued to excel.

"I worked with a signal company for about a year and a half before moving up to run the schools section for the entire battalion," Wright said.

"After cleaning up and changing the dynamic of the schools section I was afforded the opportunity to attend the Army's Equal Opportunity course, MRT (Master Resilience Training) Course and Battle Staff Noncommissioned Officer Course as the distinguished honor graduate."

Wright then had to consider her next move before reenlisting once more. This time she made the choice to become a recruiter, joining the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion in 2018.

After almost two years of recruiting detail, Wright said she has enjoyed being able to share her own experiences in uniform, with those wanting to join.

"I love that I am able to talk to the community and inform them of the opportunities that await them in the Army. I share my personal experiences and how the Army has helped me so much in life and for my family," Wright said. "I like what I do so much, that I want to continue to do this and put in my request to convert to permanent recruiter (79R military occupational specialty), which I am half way through."

For Wright herself, she is positive about her future in recruiting and said everything is a learning opportunity waiting to be taken advantage of.

"I can see my Army future developing into a successful learning opportunity that I can dominate ... I consider every opportunity given to me as a challenge to be the best I can be and continue my success," Wright said. "I believe there are many paths that I can choose in my future. By converting to become a permanent recruiter, I feel I'm going to be successful moving forward helping others."

"I believe that you must prove yourself in everything that you do, work hard and be honest with yourself and others. Never be afraid to ask for help and ensure others know your intent," Wright added. "The Army has been the best thing that has ever happened to me ... I honestly do not know where I'd be at this point if I hadn't enlisted."



Staff Sgt. Krystal Wright (left), station commander, Foothills Recruiting Station, Tucson Recruiting Company, poses with Command Sgt. Maj. Tabitha Gavia (right) command sergeant major, United States Recruiting Command, Sept. 25, 2019, Foothill Recruiting Station Headquarters, Tucson, Ariz. (Courtesy Photo)

New Mexico native returns home to share Army experiences

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. – For one Soldier, the U.S. Army has been a blessing, allowing him to live the type of life many others aren't fortunate enough to experience.

Now after years away from his home state of New Mexico, Spc. Jeremy Garcia has returned, to educate others on the benefits of military service, through the Special Recruiting Assistance Program (SRAP).

The purpose of the SRAP is to allow enlisted Soldiers to return to their hometowns to assist local recruiters by sharing their Army training experiences with family, friends, high school classmates, Future Soldiers, veterans, and community leaders.

Garcia, wheeled vehicle mechanic, 59th Quartermaster Company, located in Fort Carson, Colo., has been in the Army for three years and jumped at the opportunity to return home to push the recruiting mission.

"Parts of New Mexico aren't the greatest in terms of job opportunities and some people tend to give up after high school," Garcia said. "I wanted to come home and see if I could help some of these kids out with their lives. Luckily I was selected for the SRAP and given the chance to work with the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion for 30 days to do that."

Two weeks into his duties with the SRAP, Garcia said he's already seen the impact the Army can have on people who decide to join the military to further their lives.

"I went with a recruiter to see a local Future Soldier in a small town called Cuba. He's the only Asian in the whole town," Garcia said. "He and his mother are all each other have. They run the local hotel and barely make ends meet. He's a good kid, really squared away and decided to join the Army to help himself and his mother out."



Spc. Jeremy Garcia, a native of Chama, N.M., wheeled vehicle mechanic, 59th Quartermaster Company, Fort Carson, Colo., is pictured while assisting recruiters from the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion, July 5, Albuquerque, N.M. Garcia is participating in the Special Recruiting Assistance Program (SRAP), which allows enlisted Soldiers to return to their hometowns to assist local recruiters by sharing their Army training experiences with family, friends, high school classmates, Future Soldiers,

"While we were there he said to his mother, "we've made it mom." It made me realize how fortunate and lucky we are as U.S. citizens," Garcia continued. "To be a part of a positive impact on someone's life is an irreplaceable act."

"It set me back to reality ... made me remember just how fortunate I am to be part of the Army and live this great life," he continued.

Garcia hopes to experience further stories like this over the remainder of his time in the SRAP.

"I'm trying to accomplish as many enlistments as I can ... my goal is to get kids out of these small towns and present to them everything the Army offers, whether it's educational or medical benefits," he said. "I want them to experience the same things I have, things that will change their lives for the better."

Tucson recruiter chosen to represent Army Esports team

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix



Staff Sgt. Nicholas Mackay (left), recruiter, Casa Grande Recruiting Station, Tucson Recruiting Company, poses in a promotional photo for the newly formed Army Esports team. Mackay was one of 6500 applicants for the competitive video gaming team, becoming one of just 16 ultimately selected. (Courtesy Photo)

CASA GRANDE, Ariz.—For Staff Sgt. Nicholas Mackay, gaming isn't just a hobby – it's a way of life.

Since he developed an intense passion for gaming at the age of 14, Mackay has taken it to levels he never thought possible, culminating in his selection for the new Army Esports team in 2019.

As a recruiter for Casa Grande Recruiting Station, Mackay is in a perfect position to fulfill his gaming ambitions and use his talent to recruit the next generation of Soldiers for the Army.

His journey to the world of professional gaming began in 2009, when Mackay took an avid interest in video games, after having watched his older brother play them for years.

"I grew up watching my older brother play games but didn't get my own game system until I was 14," Mackay said. "I was excited because I would finally get the chance to play online with my friend, who told me I needed to get the game Call of Duty. As soon as I got it I was hooked. I spent on average 30-40 hours a week playing, trying to get as good as possible at the game."

When Mackay discovered the world of competitive gaming however, his devotion to succeed was taken up a notch. "At first it was mainly for bragging rights among my friends at school, but eventually I found out that you could compete versus other people in tournaments and actually make money doing it," he said.

Tucson recruiter chosen to represent Army Esports team (cont.)

Mackay had always considered military service, having grown up amidst the heights of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, although he said the Army wasn't his first choice.

"I wanted to be a part of a team and serve for something larger than myself. At first my parents didn't believe me," Mackay said. "So when I got called by a Marine recruiter the summer before my senior year of high school, they were surprised when I asked for a ride to the recruiting station. Unfortunately the Marines weren't there, but the Army was. And the rest is history."

Mackay enlisted as a radio telephone operator and was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, where he attended Air Assault School and deployed to Jordan and Iraq. It was during his five years stationed at Fort Bliss that he began competing in gaming tournaments again.

After being assigned to the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion in 2019, Mackay decided to apply for the new Army Esports team, a competitive gaming team designed to represent the Army in gaming competitions across the country.

"Becoming a member of US Army eSports was a challenge. I first found out about the Army's Esports team when I became a recruiter in early 2019," Mackay explained. "At that point I was not aware that they had a Call of Duty team, so I followed them on social media and waited to see if they would announce tryouts for one."

Soon enough Mackay had his opportunity, as tryouts were announced for Call of Duty: Modern Warfare in Nov. 2019, attracting over 6500 applicants for only 16 slots.

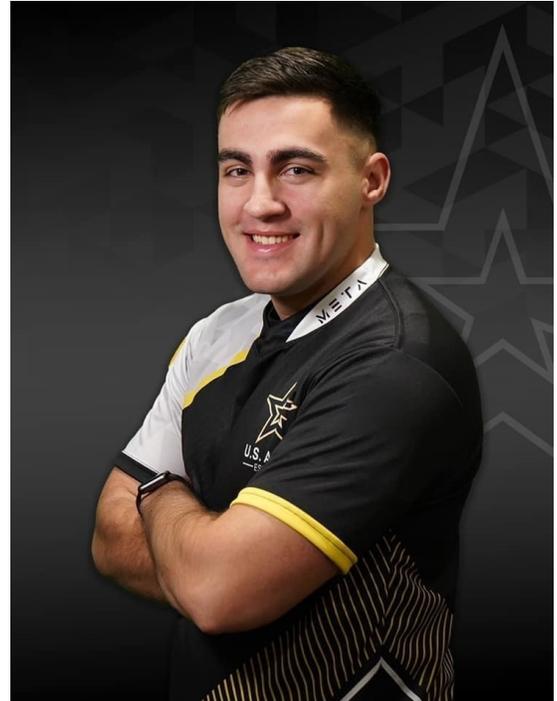
"The tryouts were competitive, but very straightforward. We were pitted against each other in random teams of five, playing several matches until the top ten out of over 150 had been identified as having the most skill, best communication, and most knowledge," Mackay added. "I was placed in the top five fortunately, so I made the main team; the other five were to be our substitutes in the event one of the main five couldn't play."

Certain elements of video gaming also tie into the Army methodology, Mackay said.

"There are ties with playing video games and skills like teamwork, quick decision-making, hand-eye coordination, problem solving, and strategic thinking," he said. "All of these skills are easily transferable and desired in the Army. When coupled with our current recruiting efforts primarily taking place online, video games have cemented themselves at the forefront of the recruiting landscape."

Mackay is thankful for the opportunities the Army has provided him and hopes to continue his career further into the future.

"The Army has provided me with countless opportunities. Some of these opportunities have been for personal growth, while others have been for some of the greatest experiences in my life," Mackay said. "I'm extremely grateful to the Army and my leadership throughout my career ... I'm excited for what my future holds in the Army."



Staff Sgt. Nicholas Mackay, recruiter, Casa Grande Recruiting Station, Tucson Recruiting Company, poses in a promotional photo for the newly formed Army Esports team. Mackay was one of 6500 applicants for the competitive video gaming team, becoming one of just 16 ultimately selected. (Courtesy Photo)

Phoenix recruiting medic spearheads battalion COVID-19 efforts

Story by Alun Thomas, U.S. Army Recruiting BN-Phoenix



Sgt. 1st Class Jared Siple (front row, center), poses with Afghan Soldiers, in this undated photo from Siple's deployment to Afghanistan, where he served as a medic with the 2nd Infantry Division. Siple is currently serving as the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion's lead medic for the battalion COVID-19 Medical Tracker Team, which oversees both the states of Arizona and New Mexico. (Courtesy Photo)

PHOENIX – As the fight to contain the new coronavirus continues, one medic in the Phoenix Recruiting Battalion is doing his part to ensure Soldiers and families in the battalion remain safe from the disease.

Sgt. 1st Class Jared Siple, recruiter, Buckeye Recruiting Station, Phoenix West Recruiting Company, is currently serving as the lead medic for the battalion COVID-19 Medical Tracker Team, which oversees both the states of Arizona and New Mexico.

Siple has an extensive background as an Army medic, allowing him to bring significant experience to the battalion's COVID-19 efforts.

“My Army medicine background started in Mannheim, Germany. There, I was the only medic inside a military prison where I took care of the prisoners, staff, and civilians and helped out at the local clinic on Coleman Barracks,” Siple said. “I also spent five years with the 2nd Infantry Division and have one deployment to Afghanistan with them. Those experiences have helped me bring medical guidance and direction to help aid our local commanders during this time.” *(continued next page)*

Phoenix recruiting medic spearheads battalion COVID-19 efforts (cont.)

With his specialty in field medicine, Siple said the COVID-19 pandemic is the ideal situation to hone his craft.

“I believe my expertise truly is in field medicine and this situation is certainly the case. With the opportunity to be the Phoenix battalion senior medic and a member of the 5th Recruiting Brigade COVID-19 Medical Tracker Team, we have helped stay in contact with Department of Army Civilians, Service Members and their family members,” he said.

“Much like the role of a Senior Line Medic with the infantry, I advise the local command teams, offering my professional medical opinion to aid them in making sound decisions for their respective units moving forward. My past experience allows me to feel ‘comfortable’ with the ‘uncomfortable’ and connections that can help bring much needed assets to our Phoenix battalion,” Siple continued.

Siple described the initial action he took when COVID-19 started to quickly escalate, causing all Army personnel to work from home.

“One of the first things I did to help the battalion out, was to get our own ‘ground zero’ and call every member in our area of operations, to include civilians, and check on them,” Siple explained. “With a basic understanding of the medical jargon on the websites such as the CDC (Centers for Disease and Control Prevention) or the John Hopkins site that has a plethora of data, I’ve pulled the meat and potatoes out of those websites in a clear and understanding way.”

Tracking the progress of any service member or dependent who is ill, is a critical task for Siple, who then ensures the relevant information is pushed to the correct channels.

“Anytime a Service Member or their dependent has been ill or been to the hospital, I track them and follow-up with them to ensure they are getting the care they need,” he continued. “If there are any issues that arise with their care, we step in with aid from local health providers. As a member of the brigade COVID-19 team, I have a direct link to our brigade footprint and help with resources that is unlike any other organization.”

Siple explained how this information is disseminated and plays a role in ensuring the battalion has the resources it needs to remain safe.

“I can quickly push down information from the Office of the Surgeon General, updates that the CDC puts out and gathering medical resources to help the team,” Siple said. “I have helped to advise the battalion on purchasing masks, gloves, thermometers and some overall risk to force measures to ensure our Phoenix battalion remains safe.”

Siple said a daily medical tracker is filtered through himself and sent to brigade level, which is turned into the United States Recruiting Command to help aid Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, commanding general, on decisions that aid him on how recruiters continue to operate.

The results Siple has been seeing battalion wide, have been extremely encouraging, with everyone doing their job to stay safe and healthy.

“I am seeing amazing results. This type of adversity has shown how strong our Phoenix battalion, our families, and the Army truly is. When I call and screen someone, medically speaking, they have a tone in their voice of deep appreciation,” Siple said. “My heart is full, that as a medic, I can do something to help the team. As the Army Medical Department motto states, ‘To conserve fighting strength.’ I have seen members of the community, our Soldiers, their families and civilians truly rise to the occasion.”