



Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Colt, deputy commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps, pins a Meritorious Service Medal to the lapel of Sgt. 1st Class Josalette R. Simmons, who was recently selected as the Army's 2013 Exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinator. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

NCO named Army's Exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinator

By J.D. Leipold

Army News Service

Sgt. 1st Class Josalette R. Simmons has been selected as the Army's 2013 Exceptional Sexual Assault Response Coordinator for her efforts in transitioning XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, N.C., from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program to the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program.

As part of what made Simmons eligible for the award, she and another noncommissioned officer served for two months last year on 24-hour duty while the brigade's

525 sexual assault response coordinators transitioned. During that time, she and her teammate manned the 24-hour sexual assault hotline.

Together, the two NCOs partnered and collaborated with senior corps and installation staff to develop a plan that made the transition move rapidly forward. The plan called for an additional 249 SARC's.

"I jumped into this position," she said. "It was either sink or swim ... and lucky for me I was ready to swim."

This is something I wanted to do because of my care and compassion in just trying to make a difference for someone who has suffered through sexual assault.”

Simmons also examined program examples from around the Army. Her efforts included consulting with other Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program, which continues to be known as SHARP, specialists and equal opportunity personnel to determine best practices and to adopt aspects of other programs and adapt them to the needs of the Fort Bragg community.

On her own time, Simmons completed a two-day course in rape crisis sensitivity, which allowed her to volunteer as a rape crisis volunteer for Cumberland County, N.C. Because of those efforts, she was made a member of the Cumberland County Rape Crisis Board.

“Sometimes there are service members who are sexually assaulted off post and who decide they don’t want to

report it to the military installation for whatever reason,” Simmons said. “The victim could also be new at the base and may not have received word as to what services are available to help them. The partnership with Cumberland County is really beneficial; and they’ll inform the victim about SHARP. One thing SHARP can do is offer a victim an expedited transfer, for example.

“This crime of violence, Soldier upon Soldier, it breaks your trust,” the 25-year veteran added. “A lot of victims are young Soldiers who have left home for the first time and they come in thinking they’re going to be part of another, bigger family, then this happens, it’s almost as bad as being sexually assaulted by someone from your own family, just breaks that bond of trust.”

Simmons was also cited by her commander for establishing a SHARP Leader Development Program which provides twice-monthly continuing education and training for SHARP specialists as well as senior leaders. ■



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