



Recruiters from the Virginia National Guard meet with the public in June 2011 outside the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia, during a 236th Army Birthday celebration. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew H. Owen)

# From The Field

## An NCO's Journey To Recruiting

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**I**t was Christmas Eve 2007 in Fallujah, Iraq, and we were making our second move to Baghdad. Before moving out, we left our outpost and made a trip to Camp Fallujah to call home. While waiting for my Soldiers to finish their calls, I checked my email and found a message announcing that I had been selected for recruiting duty. I wasn't happy about the news. I went to my squadron headquarters and begged and pleaded my command sergeant major to get me out of this assignment. His response was, "It will be good for your career." This was not what I wanted to hear. I forced the news to the back of my mind. After all, I had bigger things to worry about in Iraq.

Fast forward seven months, and as I arrived at the Army Recruiting Course (ARC), I was still unhappy about what the Army had asked me to do. But I was also determined to make the best of it. Overwhelmed with all the classes and regulations that were covered, I was definitely outside of my comfort zone. I reflected back on my early years as a Soldier — scared, nervous and unsure; the ARC made me feel like a private again.

I requested to be assigned to the New England Recruiting Battalion in hopes that I would get to go back home for three years. I was shocked when I was granted my first choice. I later found out that recruiting in this area was more difficult than other areas in the command,

and most Soldiers would never ask for this location. Looking back, I made the correct choice. Recruiting in a tough market forced me to develop the strong work ethic necessary to be successful in the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and has continued to help me to this day.

I learned as much as I could at the ARC, but the most important lesson came when the instructors reminded us that we were only learning the basics at the schoolhouse. They said that we would hone our skills when we reported to our recruiting centers. I remember hoping that was true, because I had no clue what I was supposed to do.

By the time I arrived at the recruiting center in December 2008, less than a year after I was notified of my recruiting assignment, my outlook had improved only slightly. But I have always been successful in my career, regardless of whether I liked the job. So, I set out to make myself successful and accomplish my assigned mission. I stuck to the basics I learned at the ARC, speaking to anyone who looked qualified.

On Christmas Eve, I enlisted my first two applicants — one as a 37F (psychological operations) and one as a 92G (food service specialist). I still keep in touch with them and have followed their careers. The 37F is now a staff sergeant at Fort Bragg, N.C., and the 92G is studying pre-med at the University of Massachusetts. You remember your first enlistment like you remember your drill sergeant; these are significant moments in your life. You feel proud that you made a difference in someone's life, especially when he or she goes on to be successful.

I got into the groove fast, and I became successful much more quickly than I anticipated. As a result of

great leadership and hard work, I was selected as the top new recruiter two years in a row. I had the opportunity to give young men and women a purpose and to be part of something bigger than themselves. I enjoyed shaking the hands of my new enlistees and always loved seeing the Soldiers when they came back from basic training. The kids who didn't fear me as their recruiter came back standing at parade rest saying "sergeant" after every sentence. I also enjoyed seeing my enlistees' physical and mental changes — each of the new Soldiers thinking they could take over the world. This will always be why I do this job: being able to help people while providing strength for the Army.

As I approached the two-year mark of a three-year tour in recruiting, I was being counseled by my first sergeant about converting. I told him that I enjoyed what I do, but that I missed having a job that was relevant. I missed kicking in doors in Iraq. I missed the firefights. And I missed making a difference. He had a perplexed look on his face and asked me, "How many people have you put in the Army?" I said, "About 60." He looked at me and said, "What's more relevant, 60 doors being kicked in or one door being kicked in, 60 M4s being fired or one?"

I understood the point he was making and understood that I was doing more as a recruiter than I did as a cavalry scout. For me, the greatest honor will always be that I made the Army better because of the Soldiers I recruited.

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