



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## FEATURE STORY

### **Giving hope and opportunities to Soldiers in need: Tennessee National Guard Sergeant aids comrades beyond the battlefield**

**LOBELVILLE, Tenn.** – Staff Sgt. Pamela Pugh, a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and 14 year member of the Tennessee National Guard, was contacted during the late summer of 2014 by two of her fellow soldiers who found themselves homeless and in dire need of aid. While serving as a Platoon Sergeant for her unit in Lobelville, Tenn., she immediately took the initiative to assist her comrades in arms and help them gain assistance not only by her own actions, but also with help of numerous resources now available to military personnel, Veterans and their families.

“These are my Soldiers. I take care of them every month and they know I care about them whether on or off duty. They know they can call me anytime, especially when they are having difficult moments in their life,” said Pugh. “I take extreme pride in helping these Soldiers, they are like my family, like my kids and I feel an obligation to assist them as best I can.”

The issue of homelessness among military members currently serving, and other Veterans, has become a priority in the United States, particularly as the war against terrorism continues. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs published a study identifying nearly 58,000 homeless Veterans nationally on one single night in January of 2013. The Veterans documented in the study had served in some capacity among all the branches of the uniformed services. According to Lori Ogden, Director of Development with Operation Stand Down Tennessee, the average unemployment rate among Veterans in the state is 6.9 percent and one in five homeless persons are Veterans. The Veteran’s Administration and other agencies continue to develop programs to reduce the number of homeless who have a military background, yet they emphasize the need for further support within Tennessee and across the country.

Staff Sgt. Pugh’s story began when she was contacted by a young Soldier in her platoon who was living in a rescue shelter in Nashville, Tenn. Pugh quickly heeded the call and intervened in the pressing crisis. Using her knowledge of resources available through the Tennessee National Guard Family Programs section, The Enlisted Association of Tennessee, a local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other agencies, she was able to find financial assistance, temporary lodging and full-time employment for the Guard member.

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**Sergeant assists fellow Soldiers**

Pugh's aid did not end with the one homeless Soldier. Shortly afterward, she helped another member of her unit in a similar situation. The second Soldier had sought refuge in a rescue shelter during an interim period prior to attending a state educational program. Staff Sgt. Pugh was contacted by the Soldier and once again took the initiative to help the member obtain lodging and financial aid until the member was in a stable situation. Beyond the resources accessed during the first Soldier's issues, Pugh was able to get other members of her squadron to assist in moving the second Soldier's personal belongings during the transition to her school.

"The actions of Staff Sgt. Pugh are keeping with Army Values, the Non-Commissioned Officer's Creed and are a true reflection of the nature of the Tennessee National Guard. Not only are our Soldiers and Airmen assisting their nation, state and communities, but they are dedicated to their fellow team members as well," said Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Scott, the Senior Enlisted Leader for Tennessee.

He added, "the example set by Staff Sgt. Pugh, members of her unit and the Tennessee National Guard's varied Soldier and Airmen support mechanisms worked seamlessly to help those encountering difficult times in their lives. Our National Guard is a family and when any of our own are in need of assistance we come together to support each other. It is with great pride that I was allowed to witness the functioning of our internal support network to assist one of our own. Staff Sgt. Pugh is a credit to her unit, as well as her fellow service members. She recognized a need and proactively sought out the necessary resources to take care of our Guard personnel."

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**Photo 14-45-01:** Staff Sgt. Pamela Pugh, a Veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and 14 year member of the Tennessee National Guard selflessly assisted two homeless Soldiers in her unit get a new start in their lives. Pugh guided them to resources and various support programs that aid current military personnel, Veterans and their families.

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