Liberty Battalion produces leaders of outstanding character by creating a culture of empathy, virtue, inclusion, and distinction. We lead with grace, act with honor, and strive for excellence.

To Lead with Grace is to approach leadership and the trials of life with humility, gratitude, and generosity imperative to maintaining unit morale and cohesion.

To Act with Honor is to focus on preserving integrity, developing respect, and acknowledging the value of each Cadet in Liberty Battalion.

To Strive for Excellence is more than merely the desire to reach one’s full potential, it is to devote oneself to a disciplined pursuit of growth. Liberty Battalion sets the standard for excellence through accountability, stewardship, and leadership by example.

Dedicated to Grace and Honor
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Cadet Summer Training: Advanced Camp

CDT Bobby Whiton: MSIV

Advanced Camp is a 38-day training event that takes place in Fort Knox, Kentucky and is designed to assess each Cadet’s ability to demonstrate proficiency in basic officer leadership tasks. After our MSIII year, we were evaluated on our ability to lead at the Squad and Platoon levels, both in garrison and tactical environments. We were pushed to the limit during a 12-day field training exercise where we ran missions throughout the day and manned patrol bases at night. In the field, the physical and mental capacity of everyone was pushed to the limit through various situations and obstacles encountered in the assigned missions.

In garrison, which occurs while living in the barracks on the base, Cadets were graded on their leadership in a non-field setting where each day presented new challenges such as the confidence course, rappel tower, ruck marches of 6, 8 and 12 miles, and rifle marksmanship to name a few. Each of these challenges was graded as well as our ability to lead the platoon for the day and played into our overall score for camp.

Spending 38 days in Fort Knox with a platoon of Cadets that you don’t know is a great way to build connections with people that you would normally never get to meet. I became great friends with a few of my roommates at camp through the struggles we faced and the accomplishments we reached. The experience was one that is really one of a kind and will develop each Cadet as a person and a soldier.

CDT Kendall Smith: MSIV

Even though over the last three years of ROTC I had been preparing for Cadet Summer Training in Fort Knox, Kentucky, I was still pretty nervous when I arrived in the middle of June to attend the 5th Regiment of camp. Within each regiment, there are four companies, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta. And within each company, there are four platoons of 40 Cadets. This summer training is one of that last events we are to complete in order to receive our branches and commission into the US Army, so there is a bit of pressure.

I was incredibly excited to meet Cadets from all over the country and that indeed turned out to be my favorite part of camp. Being able to work with future leaders from universities all over the US was an incredible experience. The members of my platoon were truly some of the greatest friends I have made and I learned so much about being a great leader from each of them.

CDT Kendall Smith (second from right) with fellow members of their platoon at graduation.
CDT Caleb Herskind: MSIV

Just after graduating from Advanced Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky, I had the opportunity to continue my training at Fort Polk, Louisiana. During Cadet Led Training Time, I was assigned to 2PLT (Wolverines) Dog Troop at the 509th Airborne Regiment. During this time, I shadowed a Platoon Leader during his daily tasks. One of the most valuable experiences of CTLT was getting to interact with real Soldiers. I learned how to speak confidently to Soldiers and how to gain their respect.

One of the coolest experiences I had was accompanying the Troop out to their Team Live Fire Range. I was able to observe the 4-person teams train and certify on maneuvering on enemy with live ammunition. I was allowed to not only walk the lanes during the day and night, but also lead After-Action-Reviews. Leading AARs for real Soldiers gave me confidence in speaking to Soldiers and taught me a lot of what to look for in different soldier tasks. Seeing how the Army conducts training made me excited to be a Second Lieutenant, gave me great perspective on what the job entails, and the personality of Army units.

CDT Mary Jane Wilkerson: MSIV

I attended Advanced Camp during the 1st Regiment, so I was done with my required summer training early in the summer. This made me able to go on a Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT) trip to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. I got to work with the 25th Combat Aviation brigade and shadow a 1st lieutenant that worked as a Platoon Leader for a CH-47 (Chinook) unit.

I was able to do a lot of amazing things in Hawaii. I flew over the ocean on the ramp of a Chinook, qualify with the platoon on the M-17, and participate in a field training exercise on the big Island of Hawaii with the unit. On top of all this, I also got to enjoy the sun, beaches and several hiking trails. I never would have imagined having this opportunity and am forever grateful for my experience.
I had the privilege of attending the Army’s Air Assault Course at Fort Campbell, KY this past summer. Fort Campbell is home to the Army’s 101st Airborne Division, which is one of the Army’s two divisions that jumped into France on D-day (82nd Airborne Division being the other). While still an airborne division, the 101st is now focused on proficiency in air assault operations. Nearly every soldier stationed with the 101st will have to go through the air assault course at some point if they haven’t already. Air Assault School is an 11 day course where Soldiers are expected to become proficient in the Army’s aircraft, rappelling, and sling loading operations. It is a course where attention to detail is of utmost importance.

The Air Assault course begins with day zero, where trainees undergo their first round of physical testing. This includes a 2 mile run in ACUs in under 18 minutes, lots of training in the gravel pits by instructors (known as “black hats”), and completion of an obstacle course with nine obstacles. The obstacle course is where most people failed out on day zero. Although Soldiers can fail one obstacle and still pass, there are two obstacles, the tough one and the confidence climb, which must be completed successfully. Appropriately labeled, “the tough one”, was failed most often because people did not know how to properly climb a rope. Additionally on day zero, there was a packing list inspection. If individuals failed to have any of the items on the packing list, they were dropped from the course on the spot. Future inspections did not include the entire packing list, but there were spot checks every day. It was stressful worrying about having the little things from the packing list every day, such as a pen or extra socks. This is the nature of the course, however, that stresses attention to detail. If a soldier can’t maintain accountability of their gear, they should not be allowed to maintain accountability of Army equipment, where failure to do so puts lives at risk.

After being sent home around 2:30 pm on day zero, there was plenty of time to rest up for the first real day of the course. The first phase consisted of combat operations, which included many briefs about Army aircraft & armament, safety, hand & arm signals, sling loading equipment, medevac operations, and pathfinder operations. Air assault trainees typically get to practice setting up landing zones and physically sling load helicopters, but the weather did not cooperate for our class. At the end of this phase there was a written test and a practical test on hand & arm signals.

Passing the first phase was a breath of relief and confidence boost going into the sling loading phase on days four to six. We had a six mile ruck on day four which had to be completed in less than 90 minutes. This weeded out many more individuals, but all of the Cadets who had made it past day zero still remained. We moved into a day of classroom learning and two days of hands on training with slingloaded equipment such as water buffalos, humvees, and cargo bags. The test for this phase was an inspection of the equipment where we had to find three out of four deficiencies to pass. A deficiency could have been something as small as a single pin out of place on a humvee, so this phase was high stress and high stakes, but again, all of the Cadets passed.

Phase three, the rappelling phase, is where the fun began at air assault school. The black hats became very relaxed with us during this phase because we had all earned our places in the course at this point, and safety was now a major concern. We had to tie our own harnesses, called a swiss seat. Doing so correctly in less than 90 seconds served as the practical test for this phase. Additionally, we had to hook up our carabiner to the rappelling rope correctly. A “fatal hookup” as it was called would spell disaster. On day seven, we had a 4 mile run in the morning followed by rappelling off the slanted tower. The next day we repelled from the 34 ft tower, which was a little bit nerve racking at first but it was fun once I went the second time. The final day of the rappelling phase, day nine, consisted of probably the coolest fifteen seconds of my life. We got to rappel out of a UH-60 Blackhawk from a height of about 80 ft. It was an exhilarating experience to say the least, and if you’re an adrenaline junkie, then this is something you need to experience.

The final day of the course, day ten, consisted of a 12 mile ruck march and the graduation ceremony. We woke up at 2:30 AM to get to the schoolhouse by 3:30 for the ruck which began at 4:00. We started out with roughly 330 people on day zero and by graduation only about 140 received their wings. Nearly all of the Cadets passed the course. The academics were not difficult, especially compared to the rigor of college courses. Overall, Air Assault School was a worthwhile experience, and something that will hopefully give me a leg up as a 2LT.

Air Assault!
United States Army Airborne School was unlike any place that I had ever been to in my life. Sweltering under the Fort Benning, GA, heat-category V sun for 3 weeks this summer, I had the honor and privilege of learning how to jump out of airplanes. Learning some life-saving skills and becoming a super-duper-paratrooper was one of the coolest things the Army has done for me, and if anyone that is given the choice to go, whether as a Cadet or later in their Army career, they should go for it!

1. GROUND WEEK: Everyone’s gotta start somewhere! Ground week started off with the very basics of learning how to “dawn” a parachute, nailing the basic procedures and steps for exiting the aircraft, and understanding how to safely land on the ground with a Parachute Landing Fall (PLF). The students all did PT led by the instructors (“blackhats”) every morning which often consisted of bodyweight circuits and runs before we got everything started with the day. Rain or shine, we were always getting our PT in before the start of the Airborne training day. Once teaching began, there was a block of instruction from a blackhat followed by the students breaking down into their respective squads and executing the training for the day. We spent most of our time this week in the sandpits for our PLF training, practicing exit procedures in wooden mock-planes, and jumping out of the 35-foot towers.

2. TOWER WEEK: Gaining confidence… as my company got further into the training, the pace and expectations were raised, and we moved into more complicated aspects of the training. We learned about mass-exit procedures (jumping with a group), utilized the infamous swing-landing trainer, simulated pulling “slips” on the suspended harnesses, and received our emergency procedure briefs. We spent the beginning of the week back on the 35-foot towers to practice group exits, and we moved around to both the swing-landing trainer and the suspended harnesses later on in the week.

3. JUMP WEEK: Here goes nothing! Monday of jump week came after a long and anxious weekend for the company. We were up at 0300 and making our way down to the harness shed to dawn our parachutes and prepare for our first time parachuting from an Army aircraft. After a long period of waiting, it was my stick’s turn to load up on the C-130 for our first jump. Walking onto the tarmac through the rotor blast of the Hercules meant it was go-time, and the past three weeks of instruction was about to be put to the test. After takeoff, we received our instruction to stand up and we hooked our parachutes’ static lines up to the anchor-line cable running the length of the airplane. Hearing the calls for one minute and thirty seconds, we all turned our heads and echoed the command and hand signals to the jumper behind us. Then we heard those three words we had all been thinking about all weekend, “GREEN LIGHT, GO!” and the line in front of me started to get shorter and shorter. Handing off my static line to the safety, I turned right towards the door and threw my body out of that C-130 into the 150 mph winds. After an immediate blast of air and the craziest 6 seconds of my life, the world fell silent and I had the prettiest army-green canopy supporting my fall back to Earth. With the unrivaled best view of Ft. Benning below my feet, I did my checks, slipped as needed, and performed a wonderful PLF into some tall grass on that magical Fryar Drop Zone.

As the week went on, I got to perform 4 more jumps (5 total), with 2 being combat-gear-rigged jumps and 2 being nighttime jumps under the cover of darkness. After what had been three weeks full of learning and jumping from planes at 1500 feet, graduation finally rolled around on Friday. Airborne graduation was a fantastic time to reflect on the history of the school and the outstanding paratroopers that had come before me, and I will forever be grateful for the time that I spend at Fort Benning at Army Airborne School.
Combat Water Survival Training (CWST)

CDT Jessica O’leary: MSIV

Liberty Battalion ROTC Cadets conduct the Army Combat Water Survival Test (CWST) as a commissioning requirement this past October. The Army CWST is designed to build soldiers’ confidence for operations in and around water through a series of events which may be repeated until successfully completed by each soldier.

At 0500 at Northeastern University Cabot Center Pool, the cadets were given instruction and demonstration on three events to simulate various swim survival techniques with a rifle in the Army Combat Uniform. Upon completing a buoyancy safety check, the cadets were then required to complete each of the following events to test and affirm their own abilities in the water: the 15m rifle swim, the equipment ditch, and the 3m high-entry.

First, the cadets had to successfully swim 15m with their rifle in hand unassisted, without touching the bottom or sides of the pool. Then the cadets had to jump in to the deep end backwards, wearing their load-bearing vests (LBV) and holding their rifle. Once completely submerged at the bottom of the pool, cadets had to ditch their LBV and rifle, then swim to the surface. Lastly, cadets had to step off the 3m high-dive board with their rifle in hand, yelling their branch of choice before they hit the water.

As always, the Liberty Battalion cadets swam up to the challenge without hesitancy and crushed their goals with each other’s support, bringing them one step closer to becoming US Army Officers.
Fall Battalion Field Training Exercise (FTX)

CDT Thomas Flanagan: MSIV

FTX: STX Lanes

Liberty Battalion trains leaders for all branches of the Army, but there’s one test of tactical ability all Cadets must conquer before entering the force: leading a STX lane. Pronounced “sticks” and short for “Situational Training Exercise,” STX lanes are short, scenario-based field problems that challenge a Cadet to lead a small unit of Soldiers in accomplishing a given mission. With MSIV’s acting as observers, camp-bound MSIII Cadets are assessed on their ability to follow the TLPs, develop an OPORD, and apply their tactical prowess in executing the mission. Some find lanes thrilling; others, daunting. One thing’s for certain, however: lanes are lessons for everyone.

At Fort Devens, MSIII Cadets were placed in charge of squad-sized elements and tasked with completing a series of three missions: an Attack, an Ambush, and an Area Reconnaissance. Their squads were comprised mainly of MSIs and MSIIs, Cadets who looked to their leaders for how to plan, how to move, and how to communicate. Over a three hour period, squad leaders led their units through swampy terrain against a simulated OPFOR at six different objectives. From the receipt of the mission to the end of the exercise, MSIV’s quietly evaluated the MSIII’s on their competence, confidence, and decision-making skills. When the last “Bang-Bang!” was fired and the OTM called for “ENDEX,” the Cadets grounded their gear, popped their Kevlars, and pulled out their notebooks for an open and honest After-Action Review. The plan was dissected; mistakes were accounted for; areas for improvement were identified, and strong points emphasized. Then, it came time to ruck back up. A new lane awaited a new leader, and a new mission at hand.

CDT Christopher Hughes: MSIV

FTX: Obstacle Course

On Sunday morning of October 10th, 2021, Liberty Battalion MSI and MSII Cadets, along with the MSIV Safeties, c/OIC, and c/NCOIC, awoke and got ready to move from their patrol base to the Fort Devens obstacle course. The group of forty-two Cadets made the 3.15-mile movement to the obstacle course, and upon arrival, split off into their respective groups to complete the course. The course is made up of twenty obstacles, including a 35-foot-tall cargo net, a three-rope bridge, and a swing stop jump.

The obstacle course was a great last training event to cap off a successful fall FTX at Fort Devens. The MSI and MSII Cadets were able to challenge themselves physically, as well as work together in teams to complete the course as quickly as possible. The experience the Cadets gained on the Fort Devens obstacle course also prepares them for the obstacle course they will be required to complete when at Advanced Camp prior to their MSIV year.

CADETS in front of the cargo net obstacle.

CADETS during a STX lane.

CDT ABIGAIL HENRY completes the barbed wire low crawl of portion of the obstacle course.
To begin the fall 2021 semester, Liberty Battalion Cadets set off on October 8th to conduct a 3 day FTX at Fort Devens, MA. We only had a month of training from the semester under our belt, so everyone was just going to try their hardest to see what we could do between lanes, land navigation, and the obstacle course.

The land navigation portion of our FTX was divided into day and night iterations. Land Navigation is an even in which Cadets are given a group of coordinates that lead to points out in the woods. They are given a certain amount of time to find as many points as possible and return back before the time period expires. The way it has always been is as an MSI, you go out in groups of 3 or 4 with an MSIV, MSIs go out in buddy teams, and MSIIIs go out alone. However, before this FTX, MSIs and MSIIIs had at least two lessons going over land navigation, plus, for MSIIIs, any previous semester classes and FTXs to practice land navigation.

While I was laying in security during the morning lanes before the day iteration of land navigation, my mind was thinking about what events I still had in front of me for the weekend. Land navigation was next up. As I began thinking about it, as an MSII, I realized I did not want to work with a buddy. The work in order to find a point never feels evenly split, and I did not want to feel placed in a position where I relied more on the other person versus my own skills. I trusted my training enough to ask Cadet Sergeant Major Majeski if I could navigate Fort Devens on my own.

The MSIV’s and Cadre allowed the MSIIIs to navigate by themselves during the day’s iteration. A lot of the MSIIIs did not take advantage of this opportunity, however, my land navigation buddy, CDT Sion Moon, and I did. After plotting our points, we set out on our own ways yet still managed to cross paths at different points. Everytime I came across another Cadet or another point, a feeling of relief set over my whole body because I knew I wasn’t completely off track.

As the day’s iteration came to an end, the sun began to set and I walked back to the starting point with other Cadets. Fortunately, MSIIIs had no choice but to do the night iteration in buddy teams. As CDT Sion Moon and I set out on night land navigation, we both became more nervous the further away we stepped from the starting point. Every single small light or shadow we saw in the distance, we would create the scariest scenario in our head of what it could be. As we were in our own heads about how scared we were, we could not even imagine how we would go out alone at night as MSIII’s next year.
The Fall 2021 Range Day event took place at Fort Devens with warm and sunny weather. The Cadets of Liberty Battalion were introduced to the fundamentals of weapon systems and improved their marksmanship skills. For a few Cadets, this was the first time they ever shot.

In preparation for Advanced Camp, Cadets had a course in weapons safety and how to properly use the weapon. With conscientious instruction and assistance from the Cadre, Cadets performed scope adjustments and zeroed in their rifles. This allowed Cadets to acclimate themselves to the position of shooting. Cadets were then taught the positions of prone, prone unsupported, and kneeling positions. Cadets were rotated through, simulating how training will appear during the summer. Cadets shifted to qualifying with the skills they were taught throughout the day. Once completed, Cadets learned to thoroughly clean and maintain the M-4 rifle. As Cadets carefully disassembled and cleaned their rifles, Cadre spot-checked their work.

Marksmanship is a basic soldier skill. Range Day was an exceptionally useful training experience for the MSIIIs. At Advanced Camp, Cadets are expected to qualify on the M-4 rifle, including hitting a minimum of 23 targets between 100 and 300 meters. Repetition and experience is key to improving marksmanship. It allows Cadets to familiarize themselves with weapons and gain confidence.
US Army Cadet Command describes Ranger Challenge as the “Varsity Sport” of Army ROTC. Team captains hold a tryout at the beginning of the semester to select nine team members and three alternates to represent Liberty Battalion at the 2nd Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition at Ft. Dix, New Jersey. At the competition, Cadet’s mental and physical readiness is assessed in events such as day and night land navigation, casualty evaluation, treatment, and evacuation, weapons assembly, obstacle course, hand grenades, a six mile ruck march, one rope bridge, and more.

The team captains this year were Cadets Bobby Whiton of Wentworth Institute of Technology and Ryan Cullity of Boston College. In addition to selecting the team, it is also the responsibility of the team captains to plan and execute the team’s training throughout the semester. Training took place on Friday and Saturday mornings in the weeks leading up to the competition. Cadets Whiton and Cullity did an excellent job of using the limited time and resources for training to get the team prepared for the competition. Usually, the Cadets leading the team have attended the competition at least once but Cadet Whiton had the added challenge of being a team captain despite never having attended the competition previously.

The competition itself is three days long, beginning on Friday and ending on Sunday. Liberty Battalion competed against 44 other teams from across the Northeast including the Coast Guard Academy. Over the course of the competition, Cadets push themselves and their teammates to test their mental and physical limits. Despite this, it is still one of the most fun and fulfilling weekends of the semester. Ranger Challenge is a valuable opportunity to sharpen one’s leadership and technical skills in preparation for a career as an officer.
MSIV BRANCH AND COMPONENT RESULTS

Connor Cahill
Boston College
Bachelors in Psychology
Received: Reserves Quartermaster

Timothy Carter
Boston College
Bachelors in Political Science
Received: Active Duty Field Artillery

Thomas Flanagan
Boston College
Bachelors in Biology
Received: Active Duty Medical Services

Eleanor Fremont-Smith
Boston College
Bachelors in International Studies
Received: Active Duty Signal Branch Detail: Field Artillery

Kyle Gonzalez
Northeastern University
Bachelors in Bioengineering
Received: Rhode Island National Guard Medical Services

Caleb Herskind
Boston College
Bachelors in History
Received: Active Duty Infantry
MSIV BRANCH AND COMPONENT RESULTS

Joseph Imburgia
Boston College
Bachelors in Political Science & History
Received: Active Duty Field Artillery

Arthur Lacerda
Suffolk University
Bachelors in Psychology
Received: Rhode Island National Guard Military Intelligence

Jacob Landwehr
Northeastern University
Masters in Global Studies & International Relations
Received: Active Duty Signal Corps

Kevin Luna-Torres
Suffolk University
Bachelors in Political Science
Received: Active Duty Infantry

Connor Muilenberg
Northeastern University
Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering
Received: Reserves Signal Corps

Blanca Naglestad
Boston College
Bachelors in Psychology
Received: Active Duty Signal Corps
MSIV BRANCH AND COMPONENT RESULTS

Jessica O’leary  
*Northeastern University*  
Masters in Global Studies  
Received: Active Duty  
Military Intelligence  
Branch Detail: Infantry

William Padden  
*Boston College*  
Bachelors in Management with a concentration in Marketing  
Received: Active Duty  
Military Intelligence

Kendall Smith  
*Suffolk University*  
Bachelors in Politics, Philosophy & Economics  
Received: Active Duty  
Quartermaster

Kayla Spellenberg  
*Berklee College of Music*  
Bachelors in Composition  
Received: Vermont  
National Guard  
Medical Services

Thomas Sutter  
*Northeastern University*  
Masters in Economics and Commerce  
Received: Active Duty  
Ordnance  
Selected for EOD

Nicholas Vaughn  
*Northeastern University*  
Masters in Homeland Security  
Received: Active Duty  
Engineer  
Selected for EOD


FALL 2021 GRADUATES

2LT Jenna Majeski

Active Duty Medical Services

Jenna Majeski graduated Magna Cum Laude from Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs and minors in Arabic and International Security Studies. Jenna will be entering the Medical Service Corps as an Active Duty Officer in March of 2022.

During her time in the Liberty Battalion ROTC program, Jenna acted as the Command Sergeant Major of Liberty Battalion during the Fall 2021 semester. During her 4.5 years at Northeastern, Jenna has been a member of Alpha Chi Omega, where she served as founding Chapter President and VP of Chapter Relations and Standards. She also served as Deputy City Editor for the Huntington News, a peer mentor for the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and a tour guide for Husky Ambassadors. Jenna also completed two coops and spent two summer semesters abroad in Jordan and the Balkans.

2LT Mary Jane Wilkerson

Active Duty Military Intelligence, Branch Detail: Armor

Mary Jane Wilkerson graduated Magna Cum Laude from Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Science. During ROTC, Mary Jane performed in the top 20% of Cadets in the nation, earning her the recognition as a Distinguished Military Graduate. At her Commissioning Ceremony, Mary Jane also earned the Officer’s Saber, which is awarded to the highest ranking Cadet in each graduating class. Mary Jane entered the Army as an Active Duty Armor Officer on January 9th, 2022. She will transition to Military Intelligence after 4 years of service.

During her time in the Liberty Battalion ROTC program, Mary Jane acted as the Company Commander of Able Company during the Fall 2021 semester. During her four and a half years at Northeastern, Mary Jane has been apart of Ranger Challenge, Color Guard, and Chi Omega Sorority.
Upon commissioning from Liberty Battalion in 2019, I received my Bachelors in Rehabilitation Sciences and my Doctorate in Physical Therapy at Northeastern University. I then attended AMEDD BOLC at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. I am currently stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri working as a staff physical therapist at the Troop Medical Clinic. Our patient population mainly consists of Soldiers in basic combat training (BCT) and advanced initial training (AIT). The majority of conditions we evaluate and treat are typically overuse or stress related musculoskeletal and acute sports related injuries.

Our role here as physical therapists is to work alongside command teams, drill sergeants, athletic trainers, and members of the healthcare team to determine the best plan of care for the trainee. We share a common goal of prioritizing the health of a Soldier but at the same time doing what we can to keep them in training and graduate. Unfortunately, this is not always feasible. If a trainee sustains an injury that is unlikely to heal in a timely manner and prevent him or her from completing graduation requirements, we temporarily remove them from training and start rehabilitation.

Working as a physical therapist with recruits and basic trainees can be a very challenging yet rewarding job. It is safe to say that almost everyone in the military has had to deal with an injury at some point in his or her career. Most can agree that managing and recovering from an injury is very frustrating. There is a stigma around being injured and being on a medical profile. It is easy for trainees to often become discouraged and unmotivated once they sustain an injury. Not only do we play an important role as medical providers in getting trainees back to training but also as officers to provide motivation and encouragement, reminding them not to lose sight of why they chose to serve in the military. It is a great feeling seeing your patient make it through the rigors of basic training, graduate, and knowing you played a role in helping him or her achieve that accomplishment.

This first assignment has made me think back to my time as a first year Cadet my MS1 year. I remember the many challenges and stresses of being a brand new Cadet which are similar to what these recruits are facing as they tackle BCT. That perspective allows me to relate to my patients which ultimately helps build trust and patient rapport.

I am forever grateful for my ROTC experience in Liberty Battalion. During my five years in the program, I was fortunate to have had incredible Cadre who to this day remain some of the most influential people in my life. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for their endless motivation, support, knowledge, and guidance. I am a proud Liberty Battalion alumni and I am excited to see where the Army takes me next.
I was commissioned into the Army Nurse Corps on May 2nd, 2020. I had the honor of being a part of Liberty Battalion for four years and learned so much from the amazing Cadre at Liberty Battalion. I studied at Simmons University and completed my Bachelors of Science in Nursing. Once I graduated Simmons, I studied for my NCLEX licensure exam for my RN. I passed in July 2020 and received my orders for my first duty assignment and BOLC in late August with a report date of September 23rd, 2020. There I in-processed with my Clinical Nurse Transition Program (CNTP) cohort. This is the group of lieutenants I trained with for the first six months working at Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC). We helped each other find housing and all the offices for the in processing and trying to complete our online training together while getting ready for BOLC.

I started BOLC in October of 2020. Over the 10 weeks spent at AMEDD BOLC we were able to get a taste of our responsibilities and learn new skills. They taught us the basic skills and knowledge that we need as medical officers in the first eight weeks and the final two weeks are for your specific MOS. The first five weeks of BOLC are in the classroom, with the first two weeks being online due to COVID-19. This was a learning experience having to do everything on Microsoft Teams. After the classroom period we had three weeks in the field learning the different roles of care, range time, convoy operations, and land navigation. The last three days in the field were continuous operations where we rotated through the different roles of care and rotated in leadership roles. I was put in charge of role II which we had air MEDEVACs landing which we had to unload, triage, treat then move them to the next level of care. It was a challenging role since my shift was dusk to dawn but I learned a lot about managing the flow of patients and keeping morale up when everyone is exhausted and overwhelmed. The last two weeks of BOLC were MOS specific, meaning I followed the nurse track where we learned about the career opportunities, progression, and requirements of a Nurse Corps officer. In this phase of BOLC, we had the opportunity to learn about what our specific job entails, including what CNTP looks like and how we can specialize.

They had many nurse specific MOS come in and speak. They also spoke on how to apply for higher education to study CRNA and FNP, and have the military pay for it through a program called Long Term Health Education Training Program. These two weeks set us up with the basic knowledge to go into CNTP.

CNTP was from January to July of 2021 for me, it is a residency program for new RN’s entering the Army Nurse Corps. This was a challenging but rewarding experience. Due to Brooke Army Medical Center being a Level I trauma center we see some of the most acute patients in the military health system and we are the only hospital in the Army that admits civilians. My floor, 2W, is now a Trauma Telemetry floor. I was paired up with a senior nurse on the floor to precept me for this period. We followed the progression the CNTP coordinators gave us and I slowly took on more patients as I sharpened my skills. By the end of CNTP I was ready to be on my own with 4 patients and an LVN, I was assigned a mentor in my preceptor. She teaches me something new everyday, to this day!

Throughout CNTP we worked on an evidence based practice project which we presented to BAMC leadership. My group’s project was:

“In adult medical-surgical inpatients with central lines, would the implementation of antimicrobial locks, compared to the utilization of non-antimicrobial solutions, decrease the incidence of central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI)?”

We chose this topic because nurses at BAMC widely agree that it is an issue that we should address. This was a challenging hurdle for me as someone who struggles with public speaking. As a group we practiced for hours until the presentation ran smoothly and our knowledge and confidence were evident. I feel incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to go through this program. It sets you up for success entering the nursing profession and the Army as a new graduate, especially with how challenging the medical profession is during the pandemic.
My advice for new nurses entering the Army is to come into this with a good attitude and be prepared to learn. Be a sponge. The first six months you have your training wheels on with your preceptor and take advantage of this. Ask questions! There is no such thing as a dumb question, except the one not asked. This is a demanding profession but a rewarding one. I love my job, but it can also be draining. As an Officer and a nurse you need to have a good work-life balance. To be able to be present at work and give your best care you need to care for yourself as well. Exercise, go to church, relax with your friends, find something that recharges you so you can be your best self for yourself and provide the best patient care possible. Be prepared for the ups and downs that come with your first year in the profession. The high stress points for me were my first month on the floor, then my first two months on my own without a preceptor. It is true it takes about 10 months- 1yr as a nurse until you feel like you found your rhythm. That’s ok! Enjoy the process and know that it just takes time and no one expects you to be a superstar starting out. What helped prepare me for this challenging year I have had with learning how to be a nurse in a pandemic, was the resiliency I learned at Liberty Battalion and Simmons. They both shaped me into the nurse and officer I am today, and I will always be thankful for the opportunity to learn with both of them.
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