



WVI NEWSLETTER

May
2023

Operation Clean Duds



Jasmine Conley (Army) is the founder of Operation Clean Duds. Operation Clean Duds is a 501c3 whose mission is providing 100% free laundry events for those in need in NWO. The demand for this service has been so great that Conley must limit assistance to individuals and families that are low income or have emergency needs. Individuals must wash and dry their own clothes but Conley provides coins, laundry soap and laundry bags.

This service is offered a number of times throughout each month from 3-7pm at local laundromats. Dates and locations can be found on Facebook: Operation Clean Duds

Remembering Sharlotte Turin

It is with deep sadness that we recognize the passing of our fellow veteran Sharlotte Sauer Turin. Sharlotte served as a 1LT in the US Air Force Nurse Corps during the Vietnam conflict. She was stationed at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force base, San Antonio, TX and cared for returning casualties from overseas.

Sharlotte was a graduate of St Vincent Hospital School of Nursing and held a Bachelor of Science degree from Mary Manse College. She had a long and distinguished career in nursing and was known for her compassion, skill and willingness to help others.

Sharlotte was proud of her military service and joined other women veterans in marching in the annual Lucas County Memorial Day Parade. She is survived by her husband, son and daughter. The Women Veteran Initiative salutes her service and wishes her peace and Godspeed.



Written by D. French

Save the Date

MAY

May 14

Women's Health, Whole Health: Prevention, Care and Well Being May 14-20, 2023

May 20 (Saturday)

Celebrate Armed Forces Day at the Chill Out and Grill Out from 12 - 5:00pm at the Lucas County Fairground. Free food, entertainment and games. Cash only auction. Must have military/veteran ID or current C.A.C. Sponsor: Veteran Service Commission.

JUNE

June 8

Military Appreciation Night at Whitehouse Cherry Festival from 6:30pm-11:00pm. Hosted by Task Force 20. food, music and raffles. Fundraiser: \$5.00 entry.

June 10 (Saturday)

Celebrating Women Veterans from 8a-5p. Sponsored by Little Blessings Community Outreach. Additional information will be forwarded when available

June 12

Women Veteran's Appreciation Day

June 25 (Sunday)

Stronger Together 5K.

Nearly 300,000 women served during the Iraq War. Two decades later, they remain 'the invisible veterans':

"Christina Schauer deployed to Baghdad in March 2003. For the first couple of weeks, Schauer said, they didn't have tents. They slept outside their trucks and held up curtains when people needed to shower. It took months to set up tents, flooring, electricity and eventually air-conditioning. During her year in Iraq, Schauer said she faced gunfire, exploding mortars and the constant threat of violence. Whether they were gunners or truck drivers, men and women alike engaged in combat roles – something that became far more commonplace in the conflict. "I don't think people think of women serving those types of roles in the military," said Schauer.

In the 20 years since the United States invaded Iraq, over a quarter of a million women have served there, the largest-scale and most visible deployment of women in U.S. history. More than 1,000 women had been injured in combat and 166 killed as of 2017, according to the Service Women's Action Network.

The increase in women soldiers, and the visibility of their service, was integral to the military's mission and ultimately led to major policy changes like the removal of ground combat restrictions for women. Still, according to experts, many women veterans of the Iraq War remain invisible and unrecognized among the larger American public.

In Iraq, women service members took on some of the more dangerous roles, gathering intelligence and clearing homes of suspected militants. It became clear as the conflict dragged on that the U.S. military needed to engage with Iraqi women, a job only possible with women specialty combat squads – called Lioness Teams. These women Marines and soldiers were encouraged to emphasize their femininity, instructed to take off their helmets, let their hair down and talk about their families or relate to Iraqi women on a more personal level in a way that would have been culturally objectionable if a man had been sent to interview them.

The front lines are no longer as cleanly delineated in war as they had been in the past. The changes put women in places with more responsibility and risk, but often in a way that wasn't reflected in record-keeping, housing and careers. "So you often had women being deployed to places that technically were combat positions or were deployed on submarines where they weren't included in the official ship's company of submarines. Women were serving in all kinds of combat roles; however, they weren't given the billets, the credit or the promotions that often came with those roles. It was always done in this sort of Jerry-rigged way."

In addition to the repeal of the women in combat exclusion (2015), several other major policy changes have been enacted in recent years, influenced in part by the growing visibility of women in the military – and by women veterans who pursued government service in the civilian world. Congress mandated in 2020 that the Marine Corps Recruit Training be gender integrated; the pink tax on military uniforms was eliminated in 2021; and women's military uniforms continue to evolve. And as part of the latest National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, the military authorized increased funding to support military families and reformed how sexual assault and harassment cases were handled in the military justice system.

Veteran status: "Sometimes I don't claim the status because I didn't deploy or I was deployed but didn't serve outside the wire will say they're not a real vet nor do they feel comfortable or qualified enough to speak about the veteran experience.

It's this kind of mentality that is fed by and perpetuates broader stereotypes about who a veteran is and what one looks like. A women veteran has to work hard to prove they deserve veterans discounts and services. Some opt to "forget about it" and blend back into civilian life. "Women are the most visible service members – we stick out, everyone talks about us but we are also the invisible veterans because no one sees you as a veteran or they don't assume you're a veteran." "Women veterans in general need to be better about saying, 'I served too' and, 'My experience matters too.

According to a 2012 report from Yale University, veterans account for more than 20 percent of the overall homeless population. Of the women who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, 77 percent had post-traumatic stress disorder or a mood disorder. The "typical" homeless woman veteran was an unmarried Black woman in her 30s who had never been incarcerated, the study found.

"We have to stand up and talk about our experiences so we can help those other women be seen because as long as people are still picturing a veteran as a man that is in his 60s or 70s, then these women that are struggling with homelessness and brain health issues aren't going to get the help that they need."

Excerpt: USDVS Center for Women Veterans. Author: Mariel Padilla 3/20/23