

# 'I Enjoy Giving My Time to Help Others in My Community'

## Veteran uses law degree to help prevent homelessness and secure temporary financial assistance for fellow vets

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Portia Bethea, Esquire, is #StillServing.

She enlisted with the New Jersey Army National Guard in 2010 and spent seven years learning all she could. She credits that time with giving her the desire and knowledge to continue serving for the rest of her life – personally and professionally.

After transitioning out of the military, Bethea earned her law degree. She now works for a legal aid firm in New Jersey which provides a wide range of services to people who need an attorney but can't afford the cost. In this position, she gets to help veterans and is proud to be part of preventing homelessness and securing temporary financial assistance for veterans and their families for housing needs.

"I appreciate the work I do because it allows me to further assist my fellow service members by acting as a conduit who provides information and connections to resources," said Bethea.

Bethea also encourages veterans to apply for their VA benefits and seek medical care for any service-related concerns and injuries. She tries to stress the importance of treating any issues, physical and mental, so they can live a healthy, positive life.

In addition, Bethea devotes time to volunteer service. One role that's especially meaningful to her is facilitating an English conversation group through the local library. It offers people from around the world the chance to meet together to practice learning and speaking the English language.

"I have helped participants from China, Thailand, Vietnam, Ukraine, Colombia, Ecuador, and Persia, just to name a few," Bethea said.

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While in the military, particularly while deployed to Qatar with the Army under Operation Enduring Freedom, Bethea discovered a love for learning about people and cultures. She likes teaching as well, so the library group is a good way to combine many interests in order to make a difference for someone else.

“During my military service, I had the opportunity to see new countries and cultures and befriend fellow military comrades from diverse backgrounds which were different from mine. My exposure to this in the Army taught me the value of learning about and understanding other people’s cultures and lifestyles,” said Bethea.

“Volunteering for the library gives me a chance to expose people to the very thing that I appreciated experiencing – connecting with others who have different backgrounds and cultures.”

Bethea feels she’s been given much in her life, and she’s happy to pay it forward in any way she is able.

“I enjoy giving my time to help others in my community,” Bethea said.

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