



Dustin Adkins | U.S. Army

Memphis, Tennessee



Dustin served in the U.S. Army for six years as a COMSEC Radio Repairer. During his time in the military, in addition to his MOS duties, he served as the unit armorer and CBRN specialist. He served proudly as a 101st Airborne division soldier during his entire tenure he was enlisted. From a tour in Afghanistan (2010-2011) to local operations, Dustin developed many skills and worked among some of the best in the Military intelligence community.

Upon his exit from the Army in 2015, Dustin quickly switched gears, going back to school and earning a degree in natural science. He had already established a side hustle doing small woodworking projects, but, after he exited the military, he ramped up the jobs he took on. Fast forward a few years, Dustin earned his degree and taught Chemistry and Physics and the Memphis School of Excellence. While he loved teaching his high schoolers, Dustin's true passion has always been in his trade work. So, he decided to ramp up his woodworking business to a full-time job. Currently, [Adkins Woodworking](#) is growing rapidly and has work booked until October. Dustin hopes to keep this momentum going and hopes to grow into having a few employees and a large enough space to expand on products he can offer.

Jordan Ailie | U.S. Marine Corps | U.S. Navy

Ringgold, Georgia



Jordan served in the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy for more than 16 years as both an Infantry Marine, Reconnaissance Marine, and Special Operator (SEAL). In 2012, He was selected to become a U.S. NAVY SEAL and later selected to become an instructor at Naval Special Warfare Training Detachment 1, Coronado, CA. He has been deployed multiple times throughout his career to multiple dynamic environments.

Upon leaving active duty in 2019, Jordan continued service in the Navy Reserves as a SEAL as well as a Project Manager at a Veteran owned start-up company focused on automated construction in San Diego, CA. In the summer of 2022, he resigned, with a severance package and his ambition led him to focus more on real estate and land investing, as well as traditional and tech investing. In August 2022 he sold his home in San Diego, CA and moved to the Chattanooga area to find a better family, work, life balance. Over the last few months, Jordan has become focused on business development and starting an S-Corporation/LLC in the REI sector and has been involved investing in national syndicate multi-family long term rentals.



Kristi Alderson | U.S. Navy

Nashville, Tennessee



Kristi served in the US Navy for four years as an Aviation Electronics Technician. Kristi worked on F/A 18's at MCAS El Toro in California during her time as an Aviation Electronics Technician

After the military, she pursued her passion in natural hair care. Kristi is a licensed Natural Hair Stylist and salon owner of [Kinky Rootz Salon](#). She has been in business for 18+ years, extending her experience into the beauty industry by creating a plant-based eco-friendly product line called Queen of Kinks Natural Hair Essentials. This product business is an extension of her current salon business. Kristi's vision is to inspire a world where beauty and sustainability coexist in perfect harmony.

Beyond her thriving businesses, she mentors young girls who are navigating the challenges of embracing their natural hair, while also supporting initiatives that promote environmental sustainability. This commitment is deeply ingrained in her products specifically formulated using plant-based ingredients.

Derrick Bruechert | U.S. Army

Murrayville, Georgia



Derrick joined the U.S. Army in 2009, where he served as an Infantryman for six years. In 2011, he received the promotion Sergeant during a one-year combat deployment to Afghanistan, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Derrick attended many courses while serving in the Army. He graduated from the Warrior Leader Course on the Commandants List and is most proud of his U.S. Army Sniper designation.

Since leaving the Army in 2015, Derrick's desire to lead has not wavered, nor has his burning desire to own and operate his own company. Viper Company is that company. Viper Company is a Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business that Derrick founded to do business with the United States Government. Derrick's initial focus for Viper Company will be offering cleaning supply solutions to Veterans Administration facilities. The VA has a set aside program specifically designed to funnel business to Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses, Derrick intends to fiercely pursue those opportunities. Viper Company will also have an eCommerce website and an Amazon store, where customers will be able to easily purchase products online.



Leah Dimino | U.S. Air Force

Signal Mountain, Tennessee



Leah served in the U.S. Air Force as a medic. A few years into her service, Leah was deployed to Afghanistan. It was there that she encountered her future spouse, and upon completing their respective tours of duty, the couple decided to relocate to Seattle, Washington, where they embarked on their journey of starting a family. Eventually, Leah and her loved ones made a collective decision to embrace the vibrant atmosphere of sunny Tennessee, leading them to purchase a residence on Signal Mountain.

Presently, Leah finds herself immersed in a new chapter of her life as she sets out on an entrepreneurial path as a real estate agent. Alongside her real estate pursuits, Leah actively engages in volunteer work and contributes as a member of the advisory board for Warrior Freedom Service Dog, a non-profit organization dedicated to training rescue or donated dogs for veterans grappling with conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma (MST), and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). Leah's fondness for meeting individuals from all occupations, combined with her deep affection for Chattanooga, made the transition into the real estate industry a seamless and instinctive choice. Equipped with her extensive knowledge in the realm of real estate, Leah is now poised to forge ahead on her path to complete entrepreneurship, utilizing her expertise as a foundation for growth.

Adrian Douglas | U. S. Air Force

Brownsville, Tennessee



Adrian served in the U.S. Air Force for more than 20 years as a Logistics & Transportation Manager. In 2017, he was selected to join the National Reconnaissance Office, as the Chief of Property Management. He also served in the role of Career Field Manager for fellow Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) airmen.

Upon retirement in 2019 he focused his attention on obtaining his master's degree. Shortly after completing his MS in Management in 2021, it led him to create a 'for-profit' LLC. The past two years have been a balance of professional career and gaining necessary business knowledge.

Adrian has received property management certifications from nationally accredited agencies and will continue to prepare the organization for its first major project(s). Adrian will focus on taking the necessary courses and completing certifications for property management, client



relations, human resources, and various networking outlets. He is a confident leader and CEO and has a vision to create a non-profit for housing veterans and homeless citizens.

Fernando Fernandez | U.S. Air Force

Gallatin, Tennessee



Fernando Fernandez, a former U.S. Air Force Aircraft Technician, is an accomplished professional with a deep passion for aviation. Serving for eight years, he re-enlisted for an additional four years due to his immense love for aircraft. After his service, Fernando pursued a diverse aerospace career, working with NASA, managing productions, and overseeing programs for prestigious organizations like the Air Force, NOAA, and the Space Shuttle.

In retirement, Fernando directed his focus towards worker safety in hazardous conditions, driven by firsthand experiences within his own family. He founded a startup in the wearable technology industry, specializing in affordable health and safety solutions for the workforce. His business model relies on strategic partnerships with technology collaborators and endorsements from entities like unions, insurers, OSHA, and business owners. Through these alliances, Fernando aims to outpace competitors and drive growth in his venture. His goal is to provide risk mitigation solutions for workers, even within smaller project budgets.

Richard D. Giles II | U.S. Army

Atlanta, Georgia



Richard Served in the U.S. Army for more than 30 years as an Engineer Officer. Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Giles II concluded his military career as the Community Plan, Operations and Integration Branch Chief, Army Reserve Installation Management Directorate, United States Army Reserve Command. He was responsible for the Strategic Level Engineer operational support to include master planning, contingency engineering management, knowledge management, fleet management and policy integration. His area of responsibility encompassed the entire United States Army Reserve portfolio.

Richard retired in January 2023, and has since been heavily engaged in establishing stakeholder relationships and sharpening the skill sets required to successful transition into his entrepreneurial endeavor. Rich aims to successfully launch a nutrition and sports training facility targeting athletes of every age. Since his retirement he has completed NASM certifications, developed critical stakeholder relationships, and initiated identifying funding streams to support



this venture. Currently he serves as a USA Boxing instructor at the professional and amateur ranks, is completing his PhD in Strategic Communications and serves as the CEO for a non-profit organization (The Bridge Builders Foundation) an organization aimed at developing relationships between corporations and educational institutions and the community.

Tari Ham | U.S. Air Force

Charlotte, North Carolina



Tari served five years active duty as a radio operator, at Andrews Air Force Base. At the end of his enlistment, in 2005, Tari enrolled in college at Winthrop University to pursue a career in counseling. Tari began his counseling journey counseling adolescents at a level 5 psychiatric rehabilitation treatment facility (PRTF). Tari went on to complete his master's degree in clinical mental health counseling, while providing inpatient behavioral health services to children, adults, and families suffering from severe and persistent mental health and substance use issues.

Tari earned dual licensure as a substance use specialist and clinical mental health counselor then went on to provide therapeutic services across diverse settings and issues, to include community support, private practice, domestic violence, jail, and religious and academic institutions. Tari continued his education towards a doctoral degree in social psychology, while pursuing his passion as a writer and filmmaker. Feeling underwhelmed by traditional therapy practices, Tari formed TherapeuticLiving PLLC in 2022, a coaching, counseling, and consulting practice that provides traditional and expressive therapies.

Audrey J. Heffner | U.S. Navy

Norfolk, Virginia



Audrey is a driven Naval Officer and career administrator with more than 25 years of experience managing programs, implementing policies, and supervising, training, and motivating teams in challenging and austere environments. She is committed to working with others to build a common vision and strategic direction; a skilled communicator who can think strategically and prioritize concerns while remembering to plan for future needs.

Within the last five years, Audrey has served as an Officer in Charge for Personnel Support Detachment Diego Garcia; Administrative Officer for Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron TWO; and Administrative/Legal Officer for Strike Fighter Squadron TWO ONE ONE. Her dedication led to her selection to serve as a Carrier Air Wing Administrative Officer.



Audrey will soon launch “Standards Concrete Solutions, LLC” as the CEO, providing quality concrete installation, repair, demolition/hauling at an affordable cost. She will partner with a trained and certified licensed inspector with more than 20 years of experience in concrete and paving, and an operational manager with 28 years managing residential and commercial cement projects.

Betsy Jackson | U.S. Navy

Statesville, North Carolina



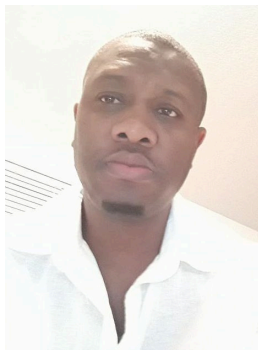
Betsy served as a U.S. Navy Supply Corps Officer for 29 years, working in supply chain, logistics, contracting, and budget management positions at sea, ashore, and internationally. From 2017 to 2019 she served as the U.S. NAVCENT/U.S. FIFTH Fleet N4 in Bahrain, leading day-to-day organization, and maintenance support to U.S. Navy ships in the Middle East, as well as leading long-term logistics and infrastructure planning for future support to U.S. military units operating in the Middle East.

After retirement in 2020, Betsy created Blue Galaxy Communications, a marketing and content development company to create materials for experts in empowerment, financial planning and wellness, leadership, and employee well-being.

Betsy is now creating an online business that combines two of her passions: home improvement and international discovery. With her business partner, she will import unique home care and home decor items to sell to the U.S. market. This online store will sell to contractors and end users via their online site as well as through other channels to include Wayfair (and its retail sites), Amazon, Walmart.com, Lowes.com, HomeDepot.com, and other online stores. Her plan is to collaborate with designers to create collections proprietary to her company.

Ira Johnson | U.S. Navy

West Palm Beach, Florida



Ira embarked on his journey in the U.S. Navy in March of 1990, dedicating 13 years to serving his country. Following his honorable service, Ira pursued his academic aspirations, earning a Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Psychology/History. Motivated by his thirst for knowledge, he pursued further education and obtained two master's degrees—one in Biblical Studies and another in Divinity. Eager to expand his expertise, Ira proceeded to attain his Doctorate in Christian Counseling from Jacksonville Theological Seminary.



As a testament to his commitment to faith and community, Dr. Johnson assumed the esteemed role of Senior Pastor at Treasure House of Jesus Christ in August 2013, where he had originally founded the church. Located in the vibrant community of West Palm Beach, Florida, the church serves as a spiritual haven for its members. Additionally, Dr. Johnson enriched the lives of countless individuals during his notable 13-year tenure as a teacher in the Palm Beach County School District.

Ray King | U.S. Air Force

Kettering, Ohio



Ray served as an aerospace clinical psychologist for the U.S. Air Force and is currently nearing retirement from the FAA. While Ray has been a psychologist for more than 35 years, he has been collecting coins since he was seven. His mother started his interest by giving him a Lincoln cents album. His father, a bus driver in Elizabeth, New Jersey, gave him his first (1910-S) collectible cent, which came from a fare-paying passenger. Ray still has that coin; it is priceless to him. After years of accumulating coins, he is learning how to sell some of them (but not that 1910-S Lincoln cent!). Ray's plan is to buy and sell coins and medals at shows as well as selling specialized collector items via

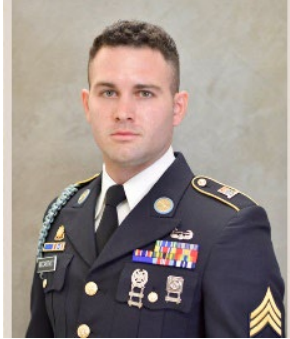
the internet.

Ray plans to open a brick-and-mortar store that will trade in precious metals (gold & silver). Ray encourages VEP participants to bring their coins to the boot camp to be appraised and to receive a cash offer.



Drew McCartney | U.S. Army National Guard

Chattanooga, Tennessee



Drew worked hard in the military for 11 years and brings that work ethic to his civilian job with Damron Plumbing. Drew has been a plumber for six years. His leadership was strengthened through the military and his willingness to strive for success. He decided to start a plumbing business called Veterans Plumbing in August 2022. From August to the present, business has thrived and has helped many Tennessee and Alabama residents with home service work to new construction plumbing.

Drew is currently serving in the Army National Guard and has been for eleven years. He currently holds three MOS's: 31B, 88M, and 11B. Drew wanted to grow in many areas of the Army. Doing so opened many doors, such as schools and even winning Soldier of the Year in 2014. He is currently in the Infantry and was recently promoted to Staff Sergeant. Drew has carried the leadership experience he gained and diligence he learned during his years in the military into his civilian job. As a result, he was recently promoted to foreman at the company he works for.

Lee McCord | U.S. Army National Guard

Knoxville, TN



Lee served in the US Army National Guard as a dismount team leader for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. He was the Honor Graduate at the Primary Leadership Development Course.

Through his civilian professional career, Lee has developed a deep understanding of the safety challenges found in warehousing and manufacturing. In 2022, he launched EnTwelve Safety LLC. EnTwelve Safety solves critical safety and efficiency problems for pallet racks, loading docks, pick modules, and material flow systems. EnTwelve primarily works in soft goods, i.e., industrial fabric assemblies. Examples include rack safety nets, cart nets, retention straps, net or webbing picking aids, conveyor netting and dock safety barriers. EnTwelve is currently rolling out its new line of super duty rack nets for flooring manufacturers.



Chris Mourey | U.S. Army
Chattanooga, Tennessee



Chris served in the U.S. Army for more than four years as a Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) Specialist. In 1990, he was deployed to Desert Storm/Shield and attached to the 101st infantry division. After the Persian Gulf War, he was selected for Combat Lifesaver certification and Advanced Hazardous Material training to demilitarize chemical munitions on Johnston Atoll. Chris has received numerous awards and was honorably discharged in 1995.

Upon leaving the military, Chris worked as a truck driver hauling steel east of the Mississippi River. Chris changed his career to Information Technology after earning Microsoft's System Engineer Certification. Chris was promoted to Project Manager at Commerce Bank/Toronto Dominion Bank in 2005 and had the pleasure of managing projects for 18 years at large and midsize companies. Chris has helped his wife and her friends open 5 smoothie bars in the Greater Philadelphia area and is currently receiving residual income each month for their success. Recently Chris has decided to help his wife repeat the same success in the Greater Chattanooga area. Chris has a passion to help veterans realize their dreams of opening a successful business and by helping churches provide a safe place for the community to socialize with their congregation and the unchurched the other six days of the week.

Paul Whitten | U.S. Army
Nashville, Tennessee



Paul has embarked on diverse and meaningful journeys throughout his life. Starting his career as a Forward Observer in the U.S. Army with a deployment to Afghanistan. Following this experience, he pursued academic excellence at The Citadel, where he deepened his understanding of military history and developed a keen sense of discipline.

Paul desires to establish a tour company in the vibrant city of Nashville, Tennessee, which reflects the values he imbibed during his time in the US Army. His vision is to create an enterprise that not only showcases the rich history and cultural heritage of Nashville but also embodies the principles of discipline, commitment, and respect that he learned while serving his country. By infusing his business with the ethos of the military, Paul aims to create an unparalleled tour company that honors the spirit of Nashville and pays homage to his time in the US Army.



Christie Wyatt | U.S. Air Force
Arlington, Virginia



Christie served in the U.S. Air Force for more than 10 years active duty and another nine years in the U.S. Air Force Reserves as an Executive Officer, Communications Officer, and Cybersecurity Officer. She received a B.S. degree in Computer Science as well as obtained her U.S. Air Force commission as a Second Lieutenant. Christie's military assignments included Strategic Air Command, Space Command, Air Education & Training Command, Air Combat Command, and Military Airlift Command. She also held joint assignments at U.S. TRANSCOM and the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA).

Christie wants to start her own consulting company specializing in cybersecurity, program/project management, strategic planning, and fiscal management. Over the past three years, Christie created a non-profit organization for social justice (americansforjustice.net). Over her life, she has obtained a B.S. degree and three master's degrees (Business Administration, Strategic Planning & Cybersecurity) and multiple certifications and licenses to include ITIL, PMP, DTM, and Life and Health Insurance Agent license.