



Keith Bowden



A United States Air Force veteran, Keith Bowden served in both Germany and at Cheyenne Mountain with N.O.R.A.D. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Motion Pictures & Television from the Academy of Art University, focusing on producing and directing for film and TV.

Over the course of his career, Keith has produced and directed reality television shows, created more than 300 TV commercials, and led major corporate media campaigns in 17 countries across North America, Europe, and Asia. His work has earned him numerous honors, including a Clio, an Andy, and seven AAC Best Commercial awards for directing.

Now based in the Nashville, Tennessee area, Keith continues to lead media strategy, marketing, and production efforts for corporate clients. He plans to use his experience in the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program to gain the knowledge and resources needed to open his own photography and videography studio.

Nikeya D. Clarkson



A service-connected disabled veteran, Nikeya brings more than 25 years of experience in the services, distribution, and transportation industries, along with a deep entrepreneurial spirit and proven leadership skills.

His career includes leadership roles at organizations such as Plenty, VCU Health, CVS Health/Distribution, and DuPont, in addition to over two decades of distinguished military service. Throughout his journey, Nikeya has served as a mentor, teacher, and coach guiding high-performing teams through effective communication, strong leadership, and a people-centered approach.

Nikeya holds a Bachelor of Science from Southern University, a Master's in Business Management from the University of Phoenix, and an MBA in Global Business from the Georgia Institute of Technology. He also earned a Communication Certification from Beijing University and holds a Six Sigma Black Belt certification through the Department of Defense. His dedication and service have been recognized with multiple awards, including two Bronze Star Medals.

Driven to solve problems and create lasting value for both customers and communities, Nikeya is participating in the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program to gain the insights and connections needed to scale his logistics business from operating two box trucks to expanding his fleet with 18-wheelers and securing dedicated, multi-state contracts.



Mark A. Cordell



Mark Cordell served in the U.S. Navy as an Operations Specialist from 1987 to 1991. He was stationed aboard the USS Thomas C. Hart (FF 1092), specializing in radar systems and tactical operations, and later served at Fleet Combat Training Center Atlantic Dam Neck, Virginia Beach, VA where he helped train naval personnel to enhance fleet readiness.

Rooted in the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment, Mark successfully transitioned into a civilian career focused on developing people and enhancing organizational performance. He holds a dual bachelor's degree in business management and human resources management from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and an MBA focused on HR from Capella University. He is also certified as a PHR (Professional in Human Resources) and SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP). With deep experience in HR, manufacturing, coaching, and professional development, he has helped organizations strengthen their workplace culture and drive lasting success.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Mark aims to refine and scale his vision of building a business consulting and HR firm that partners with companies to develop, strengthen, or revitalize their workplace culture. His goal is to help business owners reduce turnover, improve employee retention, and enhance their community impact. After more than a decade of driving positive change, he is now ready to share his expertise with a broader audience.

Ronnie Hager



Ronnie Hager, LCSW, is a United States Marine Corps veteran who served 4.5 years as an Electrical Equipment Repair Specialist and Marine Security Guard. Now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a master's degree in social work, he brings over four years of experience providing trauma-informed care.

Since beginning his therapy career in 2022, Ronnie has worked with individuals navigating complex trauma, depression, anxiety, and attachment-related challenges. He specializes in EMDR, ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, and mindfulness training blending evidence-based techniques with a compassionate, grounded presence. His approach helps clients reclaim agency, build emotional resilience, and reshape the core beliefs formed by trauma.

Through his private practice, Radical Healing Counseling, Ronnie is committed not just to alleviating distress, but to empowering individuals to rewrite their personal narratives. He is currently expanding his offerings to include therapeutic groups and inclusive community spaces that foster connection and support. As a participant in the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Ronnie aims to continue serving his community by developing a clear, mission-driven vision for the growth and evolution of his practice.



Christopher Hammerquist



Chris Hammerquist has a strong background in clinical diagnostics and the biotech industry, having held executive roles at several leading companies including Roche Diagnostics, Neta Scientific, Miltenyi Biotec, and Applied Cells. With over 20 years of experience as a commercial leader, he has achieved notable success both as an individual contributor and as the head of high-performing commercial teams.

Raised with modest means, Hammerquist seized the opportunity to join the U.S. Navy at age 17. He was promoted to E-2 out of boot camp and selected the role of Operations Specialist. His time in the Navy was a pivotal chapter that laid the groundwork for his transition into the private sector. After being honorably discharged, Chris worked full-time while attending college at night, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Rowan University.

While raising his family in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Chris credits his military service for providing the discipline and foundation that propelled his professional growth. He is the proud father of three adult children and grandfather to four. Now residing in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, he has acquired Lowcountry Pet Specialties a small business that manufactures a unique, safe, and clean product line for the pet industry.

R. Alex Jackson



Alex Jackson is a U.S. Air Force veteran and seasoned cybersecurity professional with more than 20 years of experience in IT governance, risk management, and digital security leadership across both government and private sectors. He holds a B.S. in Computer Science from The Citadel and an MBA from Webster University. His military service instilled the discipline, strategic focus, and mission-oriented mindset that now fuels his entrepreneurial journey.

Alex is the founder and CEO of RA Fox, a cybersecurity and IT services firm that helps small and mid-sized organizations protect their digital infrastructure. The company provides services such as risk assessments, compliance audits, and IT infrastructure security, all designed to help clients navigate today's complex threat landscape with confidence.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Alex seeks to strengthen his business acumen, expand his professional network, refine RA Fox's marketing strategy, and scale the company into a mission-driven enterprise that supports both economic resilience and cybersecurity readiness across industries. In addition to his professional work, Alex is also an ordained minister with over a decade of ministry experience, reflecting his deep commitment to service, integrity, and community impact.



Cleburn Wayne Jenkins



After a distinguished 33-year career in the U.S. Army, Wayne Jenkins is transitioning into civilian life with a focus on building a mission-driven real estate business. His military experience encompasses strategic operations, training management, and civil affairs, most recently serving as a Strategic Planning Officer supporting readiness across 42 states. He has led complex national initiatives and directed operational teams in combat zones, consistently emphasizing leadership, planning, and meaningful impact.

Wayne is now developing a real estate venture centered on affordable housing and foreclosure recovery. His business model blends profitability with social impact by providing transitional rental housing for displaced families while assisting former homeowners in recovering surplus funds from foreclosure or tax sales. Over time, he aims to build a portfolio that fosters financial recovery for families while generating sustainable returns.

For Wayne, entrepreneurship is more than a career change it is a calling rooted in service, leadership, and legacy. Driven by the mission-focused mindset cultivated in the Army, he seeks to solve problems, lead with purpose, and create opportunities for others. This new venture marks the next chapter of his service, one dedicated to uplifting both his family and community.

Dr. Kimberly N. Jordan-Ray



Dr. Kimberly Jordan-Ray, the eldest of seven siblings, graduated from Calhoun High School in Lowndes County, AL, in 2003 and earned a B.S. in Biology from Alabama State University in 2008. She continued her education with a Master's in Occupational Therapy from Alabama State in 2013 and an Occupational Therapy Doctorate from Brenau University in 2018. She holds certificates in dementia specialty care and specializes in pediatric therapy.

Her diverse career includes roles as a business owner, tutor, middle school science teacher, and Alabama National Guard member (2010–2011) with brief officer training in a paralegal MOS. After earning her master's, she worked as an occupational therapist in nursing homes, home health, and outpatient settings, progressing to assistant director and rehab director roles.

In 2018, Kim founded Delta Rehab Services LLC, focusing on pediatric therapy. She expanded her work as a school-based occupational therapist and launched an athletic training program in Lowndes County Schools, providing sideline care at youth sports events. She is currently preparing to open a public charter school in Alabama specializing in special education.



Daniel Kraft



Daniel Kraft served in the U.S. Army from 2012 to 2016 as a 68W Combat Medic with the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning and the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment (Airborne) at JBER, Alaska. His military service instilled discipline, leadership, and a deep commitment to caring for others—values that continue to guide his career.

After his service, Daniel earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from George Washington University and has worked for four years as a Critical Care RN specializing in ICU care. He currently works as a travel nurse, gaining experience across healthcare systems nationwide while maintaining flexibility for his entrepreneurial pursuits.

Daniel is developing Legion, Muscle & Mindset, a veteran-owned fitness facility set to open in Leander, Texas, in 2026. The gym will combine evidence-based training with military discipline and medical expertise to serve veterans, first responders, healthcare professionals, and families. Its mission is to make Leander America's healthiest city through authentic leadership and comprehensive wellness programming, including free military preparedness training for future service members.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Daniel aims to refine his business strategy, enhance leadership skills for scaling operations, and connect with fellow veteran entrepreneurs.

Hamp Lee III



Originally from Compton, California, Hamp Lee began his education at California State University Dominguez Hills before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in January 1995. Over a distinguished 30-year career, he held leadership roles such as Program Manager, Executive Officer, First Sergeant, and Superintendent, with assignments across Asia, Europe, and the United States, including deployments supporting Operations Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom. He retired in February 2025.

A lifelong learner, Hamp holds a Master of Divinity from Amridge University and has authored 22 books on spirituality, leadership, and financial literacy. He is preparing to begin a Doctor of Ministry program focused on educational leadership. Currently, Hamp serves as the founding pastor of a church in San Antonio, where he leads a food pantry and homeless outreach program serving over 1,300 people monthly.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Hamp aims to develop a solid business model and build meaningful, long-term connections. He is currently working to launch a charter school focused on innovative teaching methods, strong family engagement, and comprehensive support for underserved students and their communities.



Roman Mallard



Roman Mallard served in the U.S. Army from 2007 to 2011 as a 31B Military Police officer, including a deployment to Al Kut, Iraq, where he trained Iraqi Army and police forces. After his service, he returned to Chattanooga—where his family had relocated in 2005—and continued his education. A 2007 graduate of Hixson High School, he attended Chattanooga State and is now pursuing a degree in Business Administration at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Roman's entrepreneurial journey began at age 12 as a paperboy in Fort Dix, New Jersey. Raised in Florida, he learned to adapt quickly after moving north, finding creative ways to earn money through the winter months. Today, he channels that same drive into Nooga Nematodes, a synthetic pesticide-free pest control company that offers a safer, nature-based alternative to traditional chemicals.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Roman hopes to gain confidence in the administrative side of his business and build a strong network of mentors and peers to support his continued growth as an entrepreneur.

Jan Medina



Jan Medina is a retired U.S. Air Force senior enlisted leader with over 33 years of experience leading diverse teams, driving institutional transformation, and promoting inclusive, values-based leadership across the military, nonprofit, and corporate sectors. Her career demonstrates a strong commitment to service, education, and expanding access and opportunity for all.

As the mother of twin boys on the autism spectrum, Jan brings both professional expertise and personal insight to her mission. She understands the challenges families face navigating a rigid education system that often overlooks children who don't fit traditional molds. This personal journey has inspired her determination to create something different—and better.

Jan is launching Infinite Horizons, a charter school designed to meet students where they are academically, emotionally, and socially. The school will blend rigorous academics with vocational training, life skills, behavioral accountability, and wraparound support, focusing especially on students with special needs or unique circumstances. Infinite Horizons aims to provide flexible, student-centered learning that prepares youth not only for college or careers but for empowered, purpose-driven lives.

As a participant in the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Jan seeks to strengthen her business skills and scale her vision into a sustainable, high-impact institution. Her goal is to transform education and community support by demonstrating that leadership rooted in service and shaped by experience can change the future for children.



Natalie Molden



Natalie Walker Molden is a retired disabled U.S. Air Force veteran who served during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom as a 3D help-desk specialist. After her service, she returned to Georgia, earning degrees in Information Systems from the Community College of the Air Force and Psychology from Argosy University.

Natalie is a licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer with an associate's degree in Mortuary Science from Gupton-Jones College. With 15 years of experience, Natalie owns and operates SWGA Cremation & Funeral Services—the first woman-, minority-, and veteran-owned stand-alone crematory in Georgia. Her work focuses on compassionate, cost-effective care.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Natalie has expanded her network and gained valuable tools to grow her business and explore new ventures. She is now planning to open a K–8 charter school focused on delivering inclusive, student-centered education in her community.

Benjamin Rogers



Benjamin Rogers is a U.S. Army veteran who served for 10 years as an Intelligence Specialist and Infantry Officer. He separated from the military in 2024 to pursue new personal and professional goals and to spend more time with his family.

Ben and his wife own a nail salon in the St. Louis, Missouri area that serves an affluent clientele. Their business specializes in toxic-free manicures and pedicures, offering a calming environment and exceptional service focused on health, wellness, and quality.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Ben aims to expand his general business knowledge particularly in marketing, e-commerce, and financial modeling. He also hopes to grow his professional network and establish a solid foundation for scaling the business.



Christopher Ruga



Colonel (Retired) Chris Ruga completed a 27-year career in the U.S. Army in February 2025. He and his wife, Kimberlee, have settled in Nashville, Tennessee, where they are launching OWL Chocolate Company alongside their daughter, who also recently moved to the area. OWL Chocolate aims to offer customers the best bite of their day through handcrafted bonbons and chocolate creations inspired by the unique flavors and character of Nashville and its surrounding region.

During his transition from active duty, Chris served as a Talent Development & Policy Fellow with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. Prior to that, he held senior leadership roles including Chief of Staff at U.S. Army Human Resources Command in Fort Knox, KY, and Garrison Commander of U.S. Army Garrison Alaska, overseeing both Fort Wainwright and Fort Greeley. As a Human Resources officer, Chris served at nearly every echelon of the Army, with assignments at Fort Riley, Fort Drum (10th Mountain Division), Fort Leavenworth, Hawaii (25th Infantry Division and U.S. Army Pacific), and Stuttgart, Germany (U.S. European Command).

Throughout his military service, Chris was an active civic and church volunteer and looks forward to continuing meaningful community involvement in Nashville. He holds a bachelor's degree from Murray State University, an M.S. in Human Resource Management from Webster University, and an M.A. in Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College.

Stewart Scogins



Stewart Scogins served four years on active duty in the United States Marine Corps as an M1A1 Abrams tank crewman, including a combat deployment to Afghanistan. Following active duty, he spent two years with the Chattanooga Marine Corps Reserve unit, serving as both headquarters platoon sergeant and radio chief.

Stewart is now developing a business focused on producing high-quality, sustainable, and locally sourced aquatic plants through in vitro cultivation for aquarists. Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, he hopes to gain the knowledge and tools needed to successfully launch his venture and connect with resources that support entrepreneurship within the Chattanooga community.



Dusty Strickland



As a United States Marine, Dusty Strickland developed a mindset grounded in discipline, adaptability, and mission-first execution. His military service taught him to lead under pressure, solve problems with limited resources, and meet challenges head-on—skills that have translated seamlessly into his work as both an educator and entrepreneur.

He is the founder of The Flow Is Broke, a leadership consulting business that helps organizations fix breakdowns in systems, leadership, and workflow. With over a decade in school administration and national recognition as Georgia Assistant Principal of the Year, he combines military precision with educational expertise to guide teams toward greater alignment, efficiency, and sustainable leadership. What began as a side project has grown through word of mouth, with clients across education and business sectors.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, he aims to transform The Flow Is Broke into a full-time, scalable business. His mission is to help others lead better, serve better, and work better because when the flow is broken, everything suffers. VEP is the next step in turning that mission into lasting impact.

Aditya “Sunny” Sundaresan



Aditya “Sunny” Sundaresan served as a U.S. Army Infantry Officer from 2016 to 2021, stationed in Alaska. After graduating from Ranger School, he led a Stryker Rifle Platoon and later deployed to Iraq as a Mortar Platoon Leader, where he oversaw the Quick Response Force in Al Qa’im.

Following his military service, Sunny earned an MBA from NYU with the goal of launching his own business—a dream that continues to evolve. He is currently building Zuvier, a lifestyle brand that blends fashion with adventurous, glamorous living. The brand is being tested through a line of sunglasses, a product he sees as the perfect bridge between style and exploration.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Sunny hopes to gain the confidence and tools to navigate business challenges not by having all the answers, but by trusting in his mindset, adaptability, and problem-solving ability. He also looks forward to learning from fellow veteran entrepreneurs across industries and building meaningful, long-term connections that will help him grow both personally and professionally.



Keisha D. Tomlinson



Keisha Tomlinson is a retired U.S. Air Force First Sergeant from Salisbury, Maryland, with 21 years of leadership and logistical experience. She served in key roles across the National Security Agency, Central Security Service–Texas, the Air Force Non-Commissioned Officers Academy, and the U.S. Embassy in Belize. Keisha also led humanitarian and disaster relief efforts for Continuing Promise 2015, earning the Department of State Meritorious Honor Award for exceptional leadership.

Keisha graduated summa cum laude from Liberty University with a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies. She now aims to open a specialized charter school serving families of children with chronic illnesses, with a mission to destigmatize medical conditions and create a bridge between traditional and homeschool environments.

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Keisha hopes to gain strategic guidance, mentorship, and marketing skills to build a strong business plan and launch her vision. She is married to her best friend, Paul—also a retired U.S. Air Force veteran and together they have eight children, ranging in age from 17 to 32.

Demetric Lebron Wade



Demetric Wade is the founder of Global Emergency Management Services (GEMS), a veteran-owned firm specializing in drone reconnaissance, AI-driven damage assessment, and contractor quality control in post-disaster environments. GEMS combines field-level expertise with technology-enabled analytics to support public agencies and prime contractors in emergency response and recovery.

A U.S. Navy veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND), Wade served as a Hospital Corpsman, supporting medical evacuations at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait and providing clinical medical-surgical care in Okinawa and Italy. After leaving the military, he spent five years as a wildland firefighter with the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management before transitioning into emergency management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since then, Demetric has supported disaster recovery operations with CDR Maguire, and Tetra Tech, and currently serves as a FEMA Public Assistance Site Inspector, supporting recovery readiness across Florida ahead of hurricane season. He holds a B.S. in Public Policy with a focus on Emergency Management, and a certificate in Data Science from the MIT Institute for Data, Systems, and Society (MIT IDSS).

Through the Veterans Entrepreneurship Program, Demetric hopes to strengthen GEMS' strategic direction, expand its federal contracting capacity, and connect with a network of mission-driven veteran entrepreneurs.



Anjanette "A.J." Goodwin-Wheeler



Anjanette "A.J." Goodwin-Wheeler is a retired U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant with over 20 years of service in logistics, training, and operations management. As a disabled minority woman veteran, she has committed her post-military career to building businesses centered on legacy, healing, and community empowerment.

She is the founder of Elfama Floral Boutique & Event Hall in Augusta, Georgia, a distinctive business that combines elegant floral design, romantic event experiences, and holistic apothecary offerings. Inspired by the strength of her grandmothers Ella, Fannie, and Mattie—A.J. created the boutique as both a tribute to her family heritage and a space for cultural celebration and wellness.

Through the Veteran Entrepreneurship Program, she seeks expert mentorship, refined financial and operational strategies, and connections with fellow veteran entrepreneurs. Her goal is to develop a scalable, sustainable business that uplifts her community and honors her family legacy for generations to come.