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Lenda Adams
photo provided by Lenda Adams

The Face of the New Army

By Jackie Beynaerts

WHEN LENDA ADAMS joined the National Guard on February 6, 2001, she requested that she start in September, when the weather was a bit cooler. Of course at that time, a disaster like September 11th was unimaginable. Terrorists, anthrax and suicide bombers were not household terms and the twin towers still stood proudly in the New York City skyline. Coincidentally, September 11th was the very day Lenda was scheduled to fly to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina to begin training. After the unthinkable happened and planes were grounded, Lenda was told she had five days to either move forward with her training or have a change of heart and back out. The threat of war and new offer didn't influence Lenda's decision at all. In fact, she thought of it as "her calling."

Lenda Adams is a self-described girly-girl and fashion major at The University of North Texas. She co-owns, with her mom, seven Curves gyms in Frisco, McKinney and Van Alstyne. Given that she is in good shape

and works out regularly, nothing could prepare her for the National Guard. In the aftermath of 9/11, training became even more intense.

"There was an awful lot of standing guard and the military put more emphasis on certain drills like building evacuations," Lenda states.

ONE UNFORGETTABLE TRIP

Just back from a 21-day assignment in Romania, Lenda describes her trip enthusiastically as a success. Currently, Romania is trying to enter NATO, and Lenda's infantry brigade went to train with the Romanian Army. There, they were able to better apply exercises because of the vast amount of space. Training with people who did not speak English made it much more challenging and that much more rewarding.

"It was a wonderful training. The best I have had since I got out of basic training," comments Lenda.

In Romania, Lenda was stationed in Babadag. During her stay, her team, Unit-BRAVO Company I-112 AR

Bn. was given one cultural day. They went to Constanta and saw the beach and countryside, went shopping and mingled with the people.

"It was very different visiting the countryside and the city. In the country, people traveled by horses and carts. They seemed hundreds of years behind us." Lenda continues, "Whereas, in the city there were cars and billboards."

Compelled to make a positive impact on this trip, Lenda was able to collect toys and school supplies through donations made by Curves patrons before her departure. Once she arrived she and the soldiers distributed the treasures during her stay.

Lenda also helped focus on the renovation of Romanian schools. "The schools were in horrible condition. Children as young as three and four years old would have to go outside just to use the restroom, some of which did not have toilets or running water. We repainted four schools, put in bathrooms with running water, new side walks, roofs... that was the best part of the trip," Lenda remembers. "The schools looked great when we were finished. They are incredibly giving people. They have so little and yet are willing to give you half of everything."

MOVING FORWARD

Lenda is back home in Anna now, working at Curves, starting classes at UNT and planning a September wedding. As for the National Guard, it will always be a part of her. And as the only female in her troop, she says it's fun. They call themselves "A band of brothers, plus one sister."

"Every month I will go for training. They could call me up anytime and send me overseas. I think it would be a good experience. I fully support the military and our president," Lenda says. "I feel like I have been trained really well and am prepared for everything that is to come in the future. Females like me are the face of the new Army."

Jackie Beynaerts is a freelance writer living in Frisco.