

My name is Lila M. Guy and I am an Iraq War veteran. I served in Kirkuk, Iraq from September 2005 to September 2006. I was a soldier in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, KY, and a SGT in CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear) Reconnaissance Platoon. When we were not doing CBRN missions we did convoy security. Before going on active duty I was in the Army Reserves for 8 yrs. For 3 of those years I was an Army Reserve Unit Administrator (GS-07). I am currently a full-time Nursing student at Widener University thanks to the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Being in the Army meant the world to me because I was a soldier serving my country. I loved my job, and the soldiers I served with. We were like family. The down side was I had a real family that needed me. I was married with 3 children. About a month after returning from Iraq, my unit was informed that we would be redeploying to Iraq and had to begin training for that deployment. Knowing the struggles of deployment, my husband decided he was not going to go through it again and he left. Being a single mother and trying to do field training was hard and I could not do both. Especially with a child diagnosed with epilepsy. When my husband called me and told me that either I get out of the Army or he would divorce me and take my children, I had to make a decision. I chose my children. When I left Fort Campbell, KY I had nothing and had no idea what I was going to do. My parents had a 2 bedroom house and I moved in with them. My 3 children and I lived in a 10'x12' room. My husband and I tried to get back together and I got pregnant. That was when things got worse for us. My husband decided he didn't want any more children and I was not willing to have an abortion. Things were already tight for us and my father told me that there was no way we could stay there with the new baby. At that point I had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and was receiving disability from the VA. I was grateful for the help but it just was not enough to raise 4 children. Faced with this dilemma, I sent an email to Congressman Joe Sestak asking for help. I had not been able to find a job but was attending college. That next week I received a phone call from a Social Worker named Stephen Bennett, at the Philadelphia VA. They told me they may be able to help. At that time the HUD VASH

program was new and they had not approved any housing yet. I was happy to know there was help for me. Steve told me that he was trying to do 2 jobs at once and to be patient and soon after came Frank McGuire. Frank has been instrumental in helping me get a house. During that time I watched as he struggled to try to get housing over 100 veterans. You would think that people would want to rent to a veteran but that was not the case. The HUD VASH program coordinators were instrumental in speaking on my behalf to landlords in order to get a place and after moving in helping me to communicate with my landlord in getting things that need to be done in the house. I believe very strongly in the HUD VASH program because I don't know where I would be without their help. There are many soldiers out there that don't think anybody cares and don't know that there is help out there. I had a focus and that was getting a place to stay for my children, so I didn't give up. This program needs to be able to reach out to those veterans and let them know that yes their service to the military is over but that the government still cares about their welfare. When soldiers are no longer an asset they are thrown again and left to fend for themselves in an unfamiliar world. Anybody who has spent time on active duty and tried to integrate to civilian life will tell you, it is a different world. The HUD VASH Program helps veteran to navigate this unfamiliar territory. I am not just speaking on the behalf of the HUD VASH program, I am speaking on behalf of all the veterans who are still homeless and the ones coming home who will become homeless. They are my focus and if I could be standing there guiding them to the help they need I would. These veterans have served their country well and I believe the least they can get for their service I help finding a place to live.

Thank You,

Lila M. Guy