



U.S. Army Reveals the People Behind the Uniform in New Animated Film Series

“The Calling” explores the diverse, deeply emotional origin stories of Soldiers to help close the relatability gap between Gen Z and America’s largest military branch

WASHINGTON – May 4, 2021 – The U.S. Army released “The Calling,” a new animated film series that profiles the deeply emotional and diverse origin stories of five Soldiers as they make the most important decision of their lives: answering the call to serve. At a time of a widening military-civilian divide, “The Calling” provides an important and rare inside look at the lives and motivations of today’s Soldiers, turning what was once a one-dimensional view of Army service into something more relatable.

“Research tells us that young people today see the Army as a ‘distant star’ – a place requiring a nearly superhuman level of discipline with little relevance to their daily lives,” said Maj. Gen. Alex Fink, Chief of Army Enterprise Marketing. “Similarly, youth don’t necessarily connect with those who serve or see common ground in terms of interests, abilities, and goals. ‘The Calling’ shatters these misperceptions by showing that Soldiers are all of us: real people with hopes, dreams, fears, aspirations, families, friends, and obstacles to overcome.”

The Army conducted a worldwide search across the forces for Soldier stories to support the campaign, receiving nearly one hundred inspiring entries. After settling on a shortlist of potential candidates, stories were tested to assess their resonance with today’s youth. The final “cast” provides a rich tapestry of stories that represent the diverse upbringings and life experiences that make up today’s Army. Featured Soldiers include:

- **Cpl. Emma Malonelord, U.S. Army (“Emma”):** Emma seemed to have it all. A self-proclaimed “spoiled kid” – growing up with a supportive family, good education, and plenty of extracurriculars – Emma found herself seeking her purpose in life. While studying at the University of California, Davis, she admired the humanitarian efforts of some of her sorority sisters and began to feel a pull to be part of something bigger. After meeting with an Army recruiter, she said goodbye to her sorority friends. Though Emma’s moms were initially wary of her joining the Army, they understood their daughter’s desire to chart her own path and, now they are active supporters of the Army community by spearheading letter writing and care package campaigns for Soldiers.
- **1st Lt. David Toguchi, U.S. Army (“David”):** David never gave himself permission to dream about becoming a pilot. As a young boy in Hawaii, he spent hours watching helicopters take off from a nearby Army base. It wasn’t until his older brother, who was serving in the Army at the time, tirelessly encouraged him to chase his passion that David began to turn his lifelong dream into a reality. Following years of sacrifice and studies, David found himself in the cockpit of his very own Chinook. David’s story is one of

resiliency that today spurs him to give back in any way he can, and lately, that's volunteering at an orphanage in Honduras and giving talks at his church.

- **1st Lt. RudSheld Plaisir, U.S. Army (“Rickie”):** Rickie was a child of two worlds. Growing up in a religious family in Haiti, he experienced an incredible amount of culture shock when his family immigrated to Tampa, Fla., when he was seven years old. Rickie joined his high school JROTC program, where he fell in love with the idea of military service. During a 9/11 remembrance ceremony, he found himself overcome with emotion for his new country and the desire to defend it. He attended Florida A&M University, where he commissioned as an Army Signal Corps Officer. Rickie credits his continued service to the people serving around him and the comradery this provides, especially for someone living far away from their family.
- **1st Lt. Janeen Phelps, U.S. Army Reserve (“Janeen”):** Janeen had friends join the Army out of high school and felt equally drawn to its opportunities. At the time, her father – a Vietnam era veteran – was strongly opposed to his daughter joining. Instead Janeen began her undergraduate education at Lander University in South Carolina, but the events of 9/11 compelled her to return home to Las Vegas. A natural born singer, Janeen began picking up singing gigs on the Vegas Strip to cover college expenses, which led to a successful career performing on cruise ships. Her experiences traveling the high seas reignited Janeen's longing to serve and be a part of the solution. This time, with the support of her father, she enlisted in the Army and later completed ROTC to become a Public Affairs Officer in the Army Reserve.
- **Spc. Jennifer Liriano, U.S. Army Reserve (“Jennifer”):** Jennifer had to grow up fast. Born to first-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic who worked long hours to make ends meet, she spent her childhood caring for her family. A series of events set Jennifer on the wrong path, causing her mother to send her to her family's native Dominican town. The trip and the people she met changed how she viewed the world and stirred a calling to serve others. At 23, she met an Army recruiter who introduced her to the benefits of enlisting, including an accelerated path to a nursing license and scholarship support. Today, she is a platoon sergeant with the U.S. Army Reserve 865th Combat Support Hospital and, when she's not in uniform, works in a cardiothoracic surgical ICU and is pursuing her nursing bachelor's degree.

“‘The Calling’ showcases how five Soldiers answered their call to selfless service,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles K. Masters II, sergeant major of Army Enterprise Marketing. “Soldiers across the Army stepped up to share their personal stories with America to breakdown the stereotypes associated with those who serve. Their inspiring stories highlight the diversity in the Army as we continue to be a Team made up of great people. One common thread you will see throughout this campaign is our Soldiers all believe in something bigger than themselves and strive to make a difference in the world.”

This animated anthology is a distinct departure from previous Army campaigns – both for its arresting visual approach and its intimate portrayal of the people behind the uniform. The Army chose to deviate from the traditional Army look and feel to give priority to the stories themselves and create the flexibility to explore unique visual approaches personal to each Soldier. Animation was a clear creative choice for the campaign because of its visual interest, narrative flexibility, and Gen Z appeal.

“The Calling” employs an innovative approach to advertising that leans on longer-form storytelling to deliver its message and required an equally innovative distribution plan to ensure an environment where content would be best received. YouTube was selected as the streaming platform for “The Calling” for its appeal among Gen Z youth and its precision specific to audience targeting and measurement.

The campaign reaches audiences through YouTube, GoArmy social media channels, and GoArmy.com with a range of promotional assets designed to appeal to different segments of the Gen Z population. A series of animated trailers highlight central themes from the campaign that align with Gen Z interests, and drive to longer-form animations for a deeper look at the stories of featured Soldiers. Additional print and animated assets include portraits comparing featured Soldiers in their animated and human forms and campaign posters.

For more information on “The Calling” and opportunities with the Army, visit [GoArmy.com/TheCalling](https://www.goarmy.com/TheCalling).

###

About the Army Enterprise Marketing Office (AEMO): AEMO is the U.S. Army's national marketing, marketing research and analysis and accessions analysis organization. AEMO develops innovative and effective ways to: connect with the American public to make the Army more accessible and understood; increase awareness of both the benefits and value of Army service; and motivate the most qualified candidates to choose the Army as their service of first choice.

For additional information contact:

Laura DeFrancisco, AEMO Public Affairs, (312) 489-1237, laura.l.defrancisco.civ@mail.mil