



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Hometown News Release

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## **Crossville Guardsman and Eagle Scout does more than his duty**

**CROSSVILLE, Tenn.** – When COVID-19 swept across the United States and throughout Tennessee in March 2020, Spc. Anthony Spencer knew it was his duty to help his community and state during this time of distress. A trained healthcare specialist with the Tennessee National Guard and lifelong Scout, he had the skills and character to do what he knew was right.

A Crossville native and District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America, Spencer put his career on hold, left home, and risked his own health as a part of the Tennessee National Guard's initial COVID-19 response team. For more than a year now, he has been a key part of Tennessee's fight against the deadly pandemic.

"As a Scout and Guardsman, I felt called to be a part of the response and give back to my community that had given me so much," said Spencer.

Serving his country and being a Scout is something Spencer does not take lightly.

He began scouting in elementary school as a Cub Scout and progressed through the ranks to become an Eagle Scout with Crossville's Boy Scout Troop 271 in 2011. He earned Eagle Scout, the highest honor a Boy Scout can earn, by planning, developing, and constructing a firefighter memorial in front of the Crossville Public Safety building.

"There is only one name on the memorial, and I hope that it stays that way forever," said Spencer.

Once Spencer finished the project he continued supporting scouting, trying to live the Scout Slogan, "do a good turn daily," and Scout Motto, "be prepared." While in high school, he worked as a scouting instructor at Camp Buck Toms in Rockwood, Tennessee, and mentored scouts at his troop's meetings.

After graduating from Crossville High School in 2014, Spencer attended Cumberland University in Lebanon to earn his bachelor's degree in biochemistry. While studying, he contributed to his local scout troop and served as a lifeguard and ski instructor at Camp Buck Toms. By his junior year, he was the camp's aquatics director.

Two days after graduating from college in May 2018, Spencer enlisted in the Tennessee National Guard as a medic for the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment's 2nd Squadron, headquartered in Cookeville.

"When school was over, I wanted to do something bigger than myself, I felt called to serve my county," said Spencer. "I chose to become a medic because I wanted to help people directly. Scouting teaches us that service to others is the highest calling."



In September, Spencer left for basic combat training at Fort Benning, Georgia, followed by 16 weeks of advanced training as a healthcare specialist at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He learned how to treat Soldiers for everything from mild illnesses to battlefield casualties.

Once he graduated in March 2019, Spencer returned to Tennessee to drill at his unit in Cookeville. That summer, Spencer also returned to his scouting roots and worked again at Camp Buck Toms, as he did every year since turning 15-years-old. He also applied for and was offered a position as the District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America's Great Smoky Mountain Council. He now serves the Eagle Creek District, which serves Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, Pickett, Roane, and Scott County.

"It was a dream of mine to become a professional scouter and help give younger scouts the character building experiences that helped me," said Spencer. "After all those years working at summer camp, I really wanted to make it a career."

As the district executive, Spencer helps the organizations in his district plan events, organize and manage their troops, ensure all policies and procedures are followed, and help fundraise. He was the executive for nearly a year when the pandemic began.

"Troops and packs stopped having meetings and schools shut down. Everything came to a grinding halt as we started to understand what it meant to live in a pandemic," said Spencer.

As everyone braced for the statewide shutdown in March 2020, the state of Tennessee began fighting COVID-19. Gov. Bill Lee and Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes, Tennessee's Adjutant General, mobilized more than 250 Soldiers and Airmen with medical backgrounds to support the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and Department of Health. These Guardsmen were to be on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19 and supporting testing of Tennessee citizens.

"When my unit called and told me I was needed, there was no pause, I was excited to do what I was trained for," said Spencer. "It was a wonderful opportunity to really use my skills as a medic at home and live up to the Scout Slogan to 'do a good turn daily.'"

He mobilized with the first group of Guardsmen to help test Tennesseans for COVID-19 at drive-thru testing centers across the state. After completing initial training in Smyrna on how to conduct tests and protect yourself and others from the disease, Spencer reported to the Jackson County Health Department to assist with their testing efforts.

"Everything happened so quickly," said Spencer. "In just a few days, I was swabbing people who feared they might had contracted the virus. Some people were very scared, but we did everything we could to comfort them and ensure people we were doing all we could to help."

After a few months, he returned to Smyrna and helped with COVID-19 testing at various nursing homes across Middle Tennessee. He helped at high-risk communities, long-term care facilities, and he even tested Tennessee State Troopers in Jackson. He spent months supporting missions throughout Middle Tennessee to help those in need. At times, he also assisted with administration and traffic control at testing sites.



In November, Spencer reported to Lebanon to support the drive-thru testing site serving Wilson County. He also helped stand up an aid center at the Methodist Hospital in Memphis.

Around January, the Tennessee National Guard began establishing vaccination sites. Spencer stayed in Lebanon to develop vaccination protocols for Wilson County and then began vaccinating local citizens.

“Many people who came to be vaccinated were excited and relieved that this day had finally arrived. Some were so happy that they began to cry and kept thanking me,” said Spencer. “Many times, I was glad to lend my ear to someone who needed comforting due to his or her fear of what was going on. It was humbling to know we were able to have a positive impact on someone's life.”

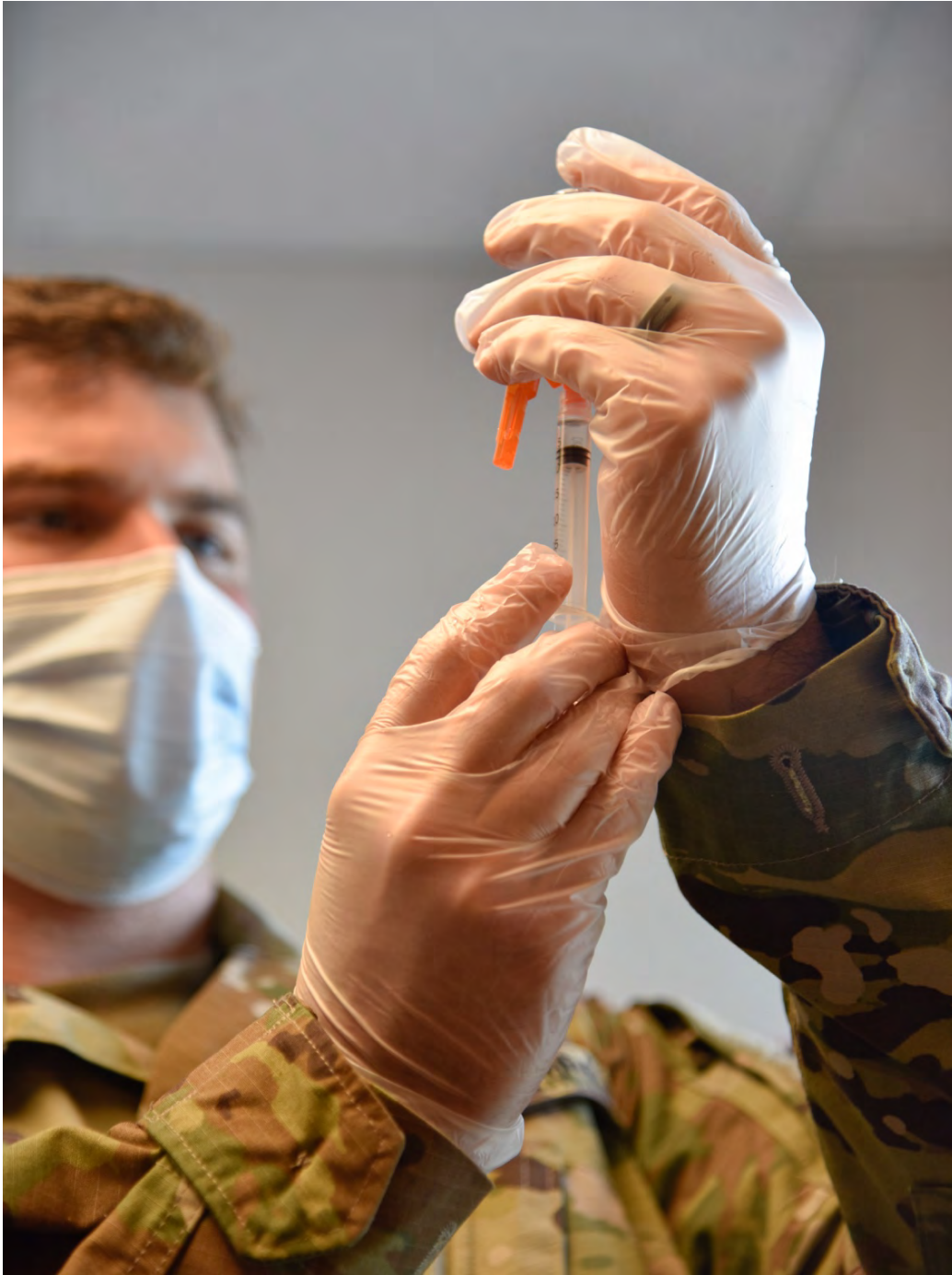
From January to April, the Lebanon testing and vaccination site was averaging more than 650 vaccinations per day. Once the vaccination rate began to slow, Spencer had an opportunity to utilize his skills in a different community. In April, he was selected to help stand up another vaccination and testing site in Hartsville with the Trousdale County Health Department. The site averaged nearly 70 vaccinations a day in an area where vaccines were not available previously.

Currently, Spencer is still providing vaccinations at the Trousdale County Health Department. His team has also begun visiting various businesses and organizations in the community offering to vaccinate in locations convenient to them.

“Everyone I’ve worked with during this pandemic has been professional and are doing everything they can to help those in need,” said Spencer. “I love being able to help my fellow Tennesseans to combat this unforeseen enemy. It’s been a privilege to serve.”

Spencer will continue serving until the Guard is no longer needed to help during this crisis. He then plans to return to the Eagle Creek District of the Boy Scouts of America as their district executive.

“It’s amazing how much Scouting and the Guard have in common,” said Spencer. “The Guard has given me the opportunity to live my Scout Oath and Promise every day and to give back. It’s been a privilege and a gift to be able to help this past year and I look forward to taking my experiences back to scouting.”



Spc. Anthony Spencer with the Tennessee National Guard prepares a vaccination dose for a patient at the Trousdale County Health Department on June 9. (photo by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas)



Spc. Anthony Spencer with the Tennessee National Guard poses for a photograph at the Trousdale County Health Department on June 9. (photo by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas)



Spc. Anthony Spencer with the Tennessee National Guard gives a vaccination to a patient at the Trousdale County Health Department on June 9. (photo by Lt. Col. Darrin Haas)



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