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### **Allied Trades: “The Craftsmen of the Guard”**

**SMYRNA, Tenn.** - Allied Trades, part of the Combined Services Maintenance Shop at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, is staffed by Soldiers who can only be described as craftsmen. True artists in their trade: paint, metal, and wood are their canvases.

“Allied Trades has a very positive impact for our units in the Tennessee Army National Guard,” said Maj. Christopher Speiss, CSMS foreman. Allied Trades craft replacement parts for almost every piece of Army equipment that moves on the ground or flies in the air at no expense to the American taxpayer. These parts are made from scratch using templates provided by the Department of Defense.

“We have eight different shops: metal fabrication and welding, a body shop, a paint shop, a sand blasting bay, a machine shop, a wood shop, a canvas shop where we do canvas repair and sewing, and I also have a vinyl printing shop,” said Chief Warrant Office 2 Justin McLachlan, Allied Trades Supervisor. “Our turnaround time in a couple of days; whereas the ordering system has a turnaround of a couple of months, so we can get vehicles up and running a lot faster than anyone else can.”

An Allied Trades Specialist is a single Army career field that lays the foundation for these Soldiers, but it is just the beginning as they learn each craft. Almost every Soldier who works in Allied Trades is a skilled welder, and according to McLachlan, experienced welders are hard to find. “We have a couple of people here who actually have an aerospace welding certification, so they can work on everything from a Blackhawk to the Space Shuttle.”

Spc. Dustin Padilla has worked at Allied Trades for just a few weeks. He is already working hard using what he learned in high school shop class and at Advanced Individual Training. He said he likes to weld, but it doesn’t stop there. He is learning about painting, carpentry, and machine work. He’s not the only person who brought their special skills to the Guard.

Sgt. Roger Harrington has worked for the Guard since 2017. “My dad was a certified welder, so I picked up some from him,” said Harrington. “I’ve always been into mechanics, fabrications, welding; stuff like that. So, when I was able to get this job it was perfect because it was something I enjoy not only on the Guard side but at home. It costs about a thousand dollars to buy a sheet of aluminum and we can probably produce 15 to 20 radio mounts. It’s \$5,000 to buy a whole new kit that has the radio mount in it. We can have four or five done in a week opposed to months through the ordering system to send the parts to us.”

Staff Sgt. Sean Fitzpatrick, a fabric worker, works alone surrounded by canvas. “We duplicate everything from seat covers, generator covers, Bradley covers, just about anything tan or green for the Army,” said Fitzpatrick. He has worked at Allied Trades since 2013 and learned his craft on the job from the craftsmen who came before him.

Another unsung hero of the Tennessee National Guard is Sgt. Larry Evans. He operates a large vinyl cutting printer. Evans’s work is seen everywhere on signs in motor pools to reserved parking spot signs in front of armories. The signs are an inspectable item, because the size and style of the lettering are mandated by Army regulation.

Also mandated by Army regulation is the woodland camouflage pattern seen on everything from generators to Humvees to anything in the field. Staff Sgt. Joshua Tidwell has been in the National Guard for 13 years and he specializes in airbrush painting. From the civilian workforce, he brought knowledge of mixing paint and how to operate paint guns. He uses a template to paint the gear that comes through his shop.

Some equipment needs more extensive maintenance than a fresh coat of green and brown paint. They need precision parts made to make them serviceable again. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Wells is a machinist with over 10 years of experience, and he makes those precision parts. Wells’ is the embodiment of the axiom, “If you find a job you love you, you’ll never work again.” He said he works at one of the coolest places in the Guard. “We have probably the most capabilities in Tennessee, probably in most of the United States,” said Wells. He operates computer numerically controlled systems that independently runs mills, plasma cutters, and lathes.

Staff Sgt. Stephanie Licerio is also in love with her job. She has worked in Allied Trades for three years and started out in automotive. She worked as a machinist for the last six months and “loves it all the way.” She received her formal training at Fort Lee, Va., along with those in her career field, but she learned how to do her job from her peers.

Tennessee Soldiers brought their skills and passions to Allied Trades. Working as a team, they continually learn from one another in order to further hone those skills. The benefit is the Tennessee National Guard is better prepared to meet the demands of a growing state and the needs of the Army.



Spc. Dustin Padilla prepares a replacement part for a field kitchen. He has worked for Allied Trades for six months at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt 1st Class Edgar Castro)



Staff Sgt. Joshua Tidwell repaints a generator getting it ready to go back out into the field. He works at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt 1st Class Edgar Castro)



Staff Sgt. Stephanie Licerio uses a grinder to make a new part for a Humvee. She works at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt 1st Class Edgar Castro)



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Wells says he works for the coolest shop in the Guard. He programs and operates computerized metal fabricating equipment. He is a shop chief at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt. 1st Class Edgar Castro)



Sgt. Roger Harrington has his dad to thank for getting him interested in welding at a young age. Today he uses those skills in the Guard at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt. 1st Class Edgar Castro)



Sgt. Larry Evans creates vinyl signs that are seen in motor pools and reserved parking spots at armories across the state. He works at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, Tenn. (Photo by retired Sgt 1st Class Edgar Castro)