



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2021

Hometown News Release

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Motlow student gains experience during COVID-19 mission

SMYRNA, Tenn. – When COVID-19 appeared in Tennessee, Guardsmen from across the state were ready to serve their community. Thousands volunteered to help in the fight against COVID-19, which gave some Guardsmen valuable experience while protecting the state.

Airman 1st Class Marialuz Deavers, a combat medic with Nashville's 118th Medical Group, was training to become an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician at Smyrna's Motlow State Community College when the Tennessee National Guard began accepting volunteers to join the COVID-19 Task Force. Soldiers and Airmen were needed in March 2020 to help the Department of Health with testing, and later, vaccinations.

Deavers wanted to serve and knew that the medical training she already received would be valuable during the pandemic.

"When COVID-19 became more prominent, my school's classes went virtual," Deavers said. "With me training to be an Advanced EMT, the hands-on experience part of the course was impossible to simulate. When the Guard asked for volunteers to help at testing sites, I knew this would give me the chance to serve my community and get additional training. So, I volunteered for Tennessee's COVID-19 mission."

Deavers used her training at several sites during her time. She traveled throughout the state on quick response missions to administer COVID-19 tests to nursing homes, state employees and private companies. She also supported hospitals in Memphis and worked at sites in Nashville and Chattanooga. Currently, Deavers is proving tests and vaccines at the Putnam County Fairgrounds in Cookeville.

"I have given several thousand COVID-19 tests since I started this mission as well as vaccines," said Deavers. "My goal is to attend nursing school once this mission is complete. The experience I have received during this operation will help me provide the best care for my future patients."

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