



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 26, 2021

Hometown News Release

**CONTACT: Lt. Col. Darrin Haas**

**OFFICE: 615.313.0662**

darrin.w.haas.mil@mail.mil

## **Carson-Newman University graduate commissions as second lieutenant**

**KNOXVILLE, Tenn.** – 2nd Lt. Ashleigh O’Donnell graduated Officer Candidate School and earned her commission as a second lieutenant in the Tennessee Army National Guard at Smyrna’s Volunteer Training Site on Aug. 22.

O’Donnell was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, and moved to Tennessee to attend college. Living in Knoxville and with the desire to do more for herself and attend school debt-free, she enlisted in the Tennessee Army National Guard in 2019 as an officer candidate and began her training in Jan. 2020.

OCS is designed to train and evaluate officer candidates over the course of 18 months through three phases aimed at building leadership skills. Candidates conducted a 12-mile ruck march, land navigation, troop leading procedures, Army physical fitness, and more.

“OCS pushed me out of my comfort zone and challenged me to do things I never would have imagined possible for myself,” said O’Donnell.

Candidates were tested mentally, physically and emotionally to determine if they were fit to lead Soldiers. The course challenged O’Donnell, but her desire to be the best role model she could be for her three younger siblings was the motivation she needed to continue through.

“I wanted to be a role model and show them that anything is possible if you work hard and believe in yourself,” said O’Donnell. “They were a big factor for me continuing to push myself during the difficult times.”

O’Donnell will be assigned to the Transportation Corps and will serve as a platoon leader for Knoxville’s Troop F, Regimental Support Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

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2nd Lt. Ashleigh O'Donnell earned her commission as a second lieutenant at Smyrna's Volunteer Training Site on August 22. (Photo by Sgt. James Bolen Jr.)

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