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Hometown News Release

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MTSU Alum graduates U.S. Army basic training, pursues officer candidate school

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Spc. Leah Ray, a Manchester resident, recently completed the U.S. Army’s basic combat training as an officer candidate in the Tennessee National Guard.

Ray enlisted in the Tennessee National Guard during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in October 2020. Four months later, she reported to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to learn basic soldier skills such as squad maneuvers, physical fitness, land navigation, military etiquette, and military tactics.

“I joined the National Guard because of the events that unfolded during 2020 and felt lead to find opportunities to help,” said Ray. “I had a moment of realization that I wanted to be a part of an organization that helps mitigate problems and supports the efforts to help those in need.”

Ray has reported to Lebanon’s Regimental Engineer Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. However, she plans to attend Officer Candidate School at Smyrna’s Volunteer Training Site this summer to become a commissioned officer.

“My goal is to earn my commission and become a Military Intelligence Officer,” said Ray. “Once I graduate, I will continue serving in the Tennessee National Guard.”

Ray holds a bachelor’s degree in music education from Middle Tennessee State University and a master’s degree in vocal pedagogy from William Carey University.

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Spc. Leah Ray, a Manchester resident, recently completed the U.S. Army's basic training as an officer candidate in the Tennessee National Guard. (Photo by Sgt. Robert Mercado)

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