

My Husband, My Hero

I am nominating my husband, MAJ Paul R. Panozzo, for the APGFCU Hometown Military Hero Award because I feel he truly epitomizes the word "hero". According to Webster's Dictionary, a hero is any person of great strength and courage.

Paul has been in the U.S. Army for sixteen years. We have been married for the last twelve of them. During that time, we have moved six times and have had two wonderful children- Lauren, 8, and Paulie, 6. It is because of the Army and those two children that I believe Paul has developed into a great hero.

Paul has an incredible sense of leadership, duty and honor – these are integral to being a soldier. Paul, just by being Paul, commands respect from those around him. Whether they work for him or with him, Paul treats those around him with respect. This respect for others, along with his great work ethic, has helped Paul to achieve success at his many jobs throughout the years.

Paul's sense of duty overflows from work to home and also the community. Paul is a wonderful father to our children. We had expected the Army to medically discharge Paul last year because of the back injuries he sustained while working in Korea. After the advice we were given in anticipation of the Medical Review Board, we bought a home in Cecil County and Paul had two great job prospects in the area. The Army decided to keep him in and within months moved him to Ft. Lee, Virginia. Because of the housing market, we could not sell our home. Through Paul's strength and courage, he is making the emotional and financial sacrifice for the next year and a half to rent a small room in Disputanta, Virginia and commute every weekend to and from Ft. Lee. Never is there a complaint from his mouth. The children are always sad on Monday mornings to see him leave but very excited to see their father return on Friday nights.

Paul treasures his time with the children but also makes sure he has time to serve the poor. Paul has helped our church do various "extreme home makeovers" in the Northern Delaware area. Paul quickly volunteers to help those down on their luck by doing various repairs in their run-down homes. Paul will tell you it is no big deal, but to these homeowners, it's a bright ray of light and they are very grateful people like him care.

Prior to Paul's three back surgeries, Paul traveled to various areas of unrest in an attempt to gain information to help soldiers. Although he is not on

the frontlines of battle, Paul has helped the soldiers from home. Whether through research in making things better for the soldier or fielding systems to protect the soldier, Paul continues to have an impact on the soldiers while stateside.

Currently, Paul has Casualty Notification Duty down at Ft. Lee. He cannot come home for the whole month of May because he has to be close enough to Ft. Lee in case he and the chaplain have to drive to the family of a fallen soldier to notify them of the death of their loved one. This duty, though heartbreaking, is something that Paul feels very strongly must be done and to the best of his ability. As a father he knows the children are having a tough time dealing with his absence; however he also feels the responsibility of this duty as a soldier. He wants to make sure that in death these soldiers are honored and respected.

I have never felt so blessed in my life. Those times when I feel like I have such a hard life, I think of my husband and his strength and courage. He has dealt with more adversity than I have and always pulls through. He is always there to lean on or to pick me up.

My husband is my hero.