



Sudheer Banala - U.S. Army



Sudheer Banala, served in the United States Army in Military Intelligence for four years. During his time in the military, in addition to his MOS duties, he served as the Chemical equipment repairer and battalion armorer. He served proudly as a 101st Airborne division soldier during his entire tenure he was enlisted. The seven core Army values build his own authentic way to lead, identify purpose, and creating moments that matter. Post military obligations, Sudheer joined the big 4s and gained experience leading technology initiatives, building client relationships, and achieving business goals. One of his passions is to serve people. Outside of work, Sudheer volunteers with Wounded Warrior Organization helping disabled veterans, he's a committee member at Lupus Foundation of America. He also partners with Metro Development Housing Agency to help families find homes in opportunity areas in Davidson County.

With over two decades of experience in the technology industry and gaining critical skills and expertise by serving in the Military Intelligence, he founded Firm Acumen solutions (FAS). FAS is a technology company that specializes in cutting-edge solutions tailored to small businesses and government's specific needs, digital transformation, and technological advancements. FAS is committed to driving small businesses forward through innovative solutions and digital transformation. Sudheer possesses a wide range of business and technical expertise with an in-depth acumen of emerging industry trends across public and private sectors in finance, healthcare, real-estate, and education.

Mark Derber - U.S. Army



Mark Derber is an Executive Leadership Coach and founder of Kaizen Leadership Solutions. In this capacity, Mark seeks to “transform teams one leader at a time” and finds it extremely rewarding when leaders strive to move intentionally along the path from good to great.

Mark has over 30 years of experience in leadership, operations, and program management in military, government, and corporate settings. Upon graduation from West Point, Mark initially served in the Army's combat arms units, then transitioned to serve as a military diplomat within Russian-speaking contexts. Upon retirement in 2017, Mark worked for the Department of Defense in Japan for five years, then left civil service for the corporate sector.

On a personal level, Mark and Sharon have been married for 30 years and have eight children and four grandchildren. Mark and his family enjoy seeking unique life experiences derived from traveling the world.



Thomas Manzy - U.S. Air Force



Thomas is from mobile Alabama and served in the United States Airforce for 22 years as a Supply Specialist. During his time in the military, he garnered numerous awards for service outstanding service and major contributions during war and peace time operation. After, his exit from the military, Thomas worked numerous jobs such as security and a full-time position with the United States Postal Service. He took advantage of the GI bill and went on to earn his BA and MBA with a specialty in Logistics. However, he knew his true calling was starting a business in the service industry and of course becoming successful as well.

Even though he knew it challenge to start a business and continue to work as a civil servant, the rewards far outweigh the risks. The business was setup as an LLC and the name is SUREKLEEN. The mission and goals of the business to provide the best service possible while creating opportunities for my may family and those prospective employees lasting for generations to come. His MOTTO is service always serve the community as well as your fellow veterans.

Bobby Mills - U.S. Navy



Bobby Mills, joined the U.S. Navy as an Aviation Electronics Tech in 1977. He spent 6 years in the U.S. Navy and served honorably on several different aircraft carriers. His favorite duty station was Rota, Spain. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1985.

Bobby began his civilian career which entailed many different career paths. He started and owned two businesses that were eventually sold, both businesses are currently operating today. In 2018, he went back to college and received a bachelor's degree in Computer Science with a major in Network Security. For the past 15 years Bobby has worked in real estate sales with a focus on residential properties. Bobby's latest business venture was started in 2022. It entails selling ice cream, pizza, hot dogs, snacks, and soda on Lake Chickamauga in Chattanooga, TN. The business model is basically a cross between a traditional ice cream truck and a food truck operating from a 26 ft. pontoon boat called the "Ice Cream Float". Bobby is now very interested in expanding this business model to include a coffee and donut truck or ice cream tricycle to allow the business to expand its territory as well as its season.



Ashton Nestell - U.S. Army



Ashton enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2016 and served as an infantryman for four years. Ashton was the company armorer in addition to his regular MOS duties and in 2019, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. As much as Ashton enjoyed his time in service, his new passion is working in the home improvement industry. Discipline, listening, and attention to detail are all skills that Ashton learned through the military and still lives by today in his professional and personal life.

After transitioning out of the military, Ashton pursued a career in the home improvement industry. Ashton has worked as a landscaper, building custom Trex decks, painting, and building custom campervans. In 2023, Ashton began work at Patriots' Pride Windows as a senior project manager. Patriots' Pride Windows is a veteran-owned company that specializes in the installation of windows, doors, patio enclosures, and James Hardie siding. Patriots' Pride Windows is also in association with Purple Heart Homes to provide solutions and opportunities to qualified Veterans. Ashton's true passion is to still be of service and live by the Patriots' Pride Windows motto: No Homeowner Left Behind.

J. Dirk Sheffer - U.S. Army



J. Dirk Sheffer served the U.S. Army as a 13F Forward Observer for Artillery, responsible for providing artillery, mortars, and close air support primarily in the 10th Mountain Division, retiring after 22 years. He deployed to Desert Storm, Invaded Afghanistan (OEF 1), went back after a year (OEF3), and then Iraq (OIF5); he also deployed to Haiti, El Salvador, and Honduras. Dirk was the Counter IED instructor and development for 1st Army Division West at Ft Bliss, Texas. He earned the Sergeant Audie Murphy membership as a Sergeant in 1993.

After his retirement, Dirk started working for Raytheon IIS as a Counter IED instructor in Bagram, Afghanistan. When the contract ended, he was accepted through a competitive process for only 17 seats a semester at the oldest Gunsmithing school in Trinidad Com, where he earned an AAS. Dirk earned a certificate with Raytheon in Six Sigma Green Belt and further earned a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt while working for Ruger Firearms in Prescott, AZ.

Amidst personal challenges, Dirk founded Big Chino Vending, a snack and drink supplier. His business venture serves the Quad Cities of Prescott, Prescott Valley, Dewey, and Humbolt, Arizona. Big Chino Vending is the only independent provider of drinks and snacks through automated vending.



Daniel Spangler - U.S. Marine Corps



Dan Spangler is a Marine veteran, dog enthusiast, entrepreneur, and devoted husband. In 1998, inspired by a recruiter's compelling portrayal, he enlisted in the USMC, proudly serving as a 2831 Digital Wide-band Satellite Systems Technician until an injury during an Iraqi firefight in 2003 led to his medical retirement. Back in the U.S., Dan adopted a dog named Spanky, sparking a transformative journey. They undertook an impressive trek from North Carolina to California and back in 30 days with only \$50, raising nearly \$30,000 for his non-profit, "A Dog's Dream Dreamers Foundation."

In 2010, Dan founded A Dog's Dream, a comprehensive dog resort offering boarding, daycare, grooming, training, and retail services. The 8,000-square-foot facility featured over 50 kennels, including luxury options with turndown service, an indoor heated pool, and grooming services. The business experienced a 20% annual growth, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, and expanded in 2022 to include in-home pet sitting and a doggy shuttle service. After 14 years of success, Dan sold A Dog's Dream in April 2024. Dan's entrepreneurial journey continued with Top Dog Associates, founded in 2021, focusing on leadership skills for entrepreneurs through courses, seminars, and speaking engagements across the country. Married since 2006, Dan and his wife enjoy Tough Mudders, RVing, and creative DIY projects. They live with their beloved dog, Farley.

Aleshia Tucker - U.S. Army National Guard



Aleshia knew that after high school, she would have to take care of herself, and joining the military seemed like the right choice. After serving in her high school JROTC, she joined the military when she was 17 years old. On Aleshia's 21st birthday, she spent time in Ballad, Iraq, where she worked in S1, handling mail and awards with precision. Her dedication led her to pursue graduate school, prompting a switch from her Aviation unit to an engineering unit in a different town.

Aleshia earned her undergraduate degree in Sociology and her master's in social work. Today, she is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in North Carolina and Idaho. She aspires to establish her own practice, initiate a group practice, and open a building for therapists to rent office space.



Robert Wolford - U.S. Army



Robert Jeffrey “Jeff” Wolford is the Team Leader and Managing Attorney of the law firm WOLFORD & ROBINSON. He represents individual entrepreneurs and start-up businesses, banks, credit unions, consumer lending institutions, homeowners’ associations, trade professionals, and property management companies. Jeff attended the University of Georgia and earned a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Journalism. He earned a B.A. in History from Columbus State University and graduated from Mercer University’s Walter F. George School of Law in 1999.

Jeff enlisted in the U.S. Army in October 1992 and completed Airborne School in 1993. During his service, he served with multiple Regiments, including the 1st BN–507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 2nd BN–15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, and the 1st BN–5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. After September 11, 2001, Jeff joined the U.S. Army Reserves and later transferred to the Army National Guard. From February 2004 to September 2009, he served as the Command Judge Advocate for the 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), and in 2005, completed Special Forces Assessment and Selection at Camp McCall, North Carolina. He served as the Military Magistrate for U.S. Military Forces, Civilians, and Multi-Nation Military Partners at Kandahar Airfield. In January 2019, LTC deployed to Al Asad Airbase, Iraq, with the 201st Regional Support Group of the Georgia Army National Guard, where he served as the base Staff Judge Advocate.