

November 11, 2020

Honoring Our Own Veteran

Today as a nation, we honor our veterans. Here at the Montana Community Foundation, we want to honor and share the story of our own veteran. Meet Jenny Lou Stark, MCF Scholarship Manager, University of Montana Alumnus, mother of two, and Navy Reserves veteran.

In the late eighties while attending school at the University of Montana, Jenny felt the need to make a change in her life. As a born and raised Montana girl, she was on the hunt to find her next adventure to see beyond the rugged borders of Western Montana.



Joining the Sea/Air Mariner (SAM) Reserve Program

In 1986, Jenny met with the on-campus Naval recruiter, and after visiting for a while, the recruiter determined that she would be a great fit for the Sea/Air Mariner (SAM) Reserve Program. Since Jenny wanted to continue to be a full-time student, the recruiter knew that SAM would fit in well with her full course load because she would only have to drill once a month and 2 full weeks a year.

In February 1987, Jenny left Missoula and headed to Butte, where she was sworn into the Navy Reserves at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). She then boarded a plane at the Butte Airport to Orlando to attend boot camp at the Naval Recruiting Facility. Members of the reserve do not typically go to boot camp, however, by going to boot camp, Jenny had access to the GI bill right away to help financially with college.

Representing Indigenous People in the Military

During her time in boot camp, Jenny was an extraordinary recruit. Her uniform was always crisp, her bed perfectly made, and her very long birth name, Jenny Spotted-Wolf, was permanently inked on every piece of her belongings. One day while Jenny was leaving the dining hall, she passed a group of company leaders. She saluted the officers as she passed but before she could go on with her business, the officers waved her over. As you can imagine, Jenny, an exceptional recruit, was a bit nervous as she approached the group of officers.

Jenny Spotted-Wolf, was not in trouble. Instead, the company leaders were curious about Jenny's birth name and heritage. They were amazed to meet a Northern Cheyenne Indian from Montana.

A Humble Veteran

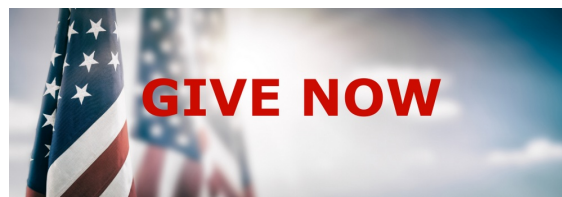
After six years, Jenny left the SAM program and the Navy Reserves as a Petty Officer Second Class, where she spent two weeks every year in Bremerton, Washington. Over their drill weeks, her company worked in warehouses stocking ships while in port. They would pull anything from small screws to food to televisions. She was never deployed but her bags were packed to leave for Desert Storm at a moment's notice. However, the furthest she would ever get from home while in the reserves was Norfolk, Virginia.

She did get the opportunity to become a certified forklift driver and traveled in a military cargo plane from Missoula to Seattle instead of doing their usual carpooling. She would not trade her experience for anything. Even though she is humble, stating that she was just "playing Navy", we know she made a big impact while serving our country. Thank you for your service, Jenny.

Join us in Honoring Montana Veterans

On this day we honor Jenny Lou and all of our veterans for their service to our country.

Say thank you to a veteran in your life with a gift to the Montana Veterans Fund.



Montana Veterans Fund

An endowed fund at MCF that makes a lasting impact on Montana's veterans by supporting continued education, employment support, mental health resources, and more to our local veterans. When you give to an endowment fund, your gift keeps on giving to the causes you care about. This means a gift to the Montana Veterans Fund will not only support veterans across our state now but will also support the generations of veterans to come.

ABOUT MONTANA

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

We're all about Montana's future. Through the power of permanently endowed funds, we help people achieve their philanthropic goals and nonprofit organizations establish stable incomes to support their efforts. Our mission is to cultivate a culture of giving so Montana communities can flourish.

