



# Climbing the ranks

NHS grad promoted  
to Navy Lt. Cmdr.



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A section of the Northfield VFW was packed on Sept. 7 during the Defeat of Jesse James Days for the promotion ceremony of a Northfield High School alumnus who has achieved Lieutenant Commander status in the U.S. Navy.

The person being recognized at this event filled with friends and family is 2004 Northfield High School graduate Shannon McKown-Evans, a woman who has worked herself up the military ranks as a nurse.

"It was amazing," she said. "It just meant a lot to me. ... I keep a part of their lives still. It was a great turnout, and I was so happy that everyone came."

McKown-Evans, 33, a Maryland native, moved to Northfield when she was in second grade. A 2004 NHS graduate, she attended college at Bethel University, where she earned her nursing degree. It was during that time she said she felt called to join the military. Between her junior and senior years she lived with her sister and brother-in-law in Hawaii and fell in love with the culture. When she returned stateside, she found a recruiter and expressed her desire to join the military.

She then entered officer development school in fall 2009 and spent five weeks in Rhode Island.

"You just learn how to be an officer in the Navy," McKown-Evans said of her time in development school.

McKown-Evans attended officer school for five weeks in Rhode Island, and her first duty station was in Bethesda, Maryland, at the National Naval Medical Center, where she was stationed for three years.

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**Northfield native Shannon McKown-Evans receives her shoulder blades for her promotion to lieutenant commander from her cousin and grandparent, Cary Larson, Sept. 7 during a ceremony at the Northfield VFW. (Sam Wilmes/Northfield News)**



**Larson is seen in this picture explaining the importance of serving the U.S. and McKown-Evans's military career. (Sam Wilmes/Northfield News)**

promoted to the next rank.”

The Rev. Cary Larson, a retired Navy Commander who spent five years in active service and 15 in reserves, placed the shoulder boards on McKown-Evans's shoulder during early September.

“I'm very proud of her,” he said.

“It's a great honor. I really appreciated Shannon bringing this event home.”

McKown-Evans's mother is a retired nurse, and her daughter decided she wanted to use that same interest to benefit her country.

“Other than being proud, it's just really neat that she has taken her interest in nursing and put it to her service of the country,” Larson said.

McKown-Evans's promotion comes in a competitive atmosphere that only becomes more so the

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higher you rise in the ranks. Her next station was at a small clinic in Cherry Point, North Carolina, before she went to Yokosuka, Japan, where she was a pediatric clinic nurse for three years. She has been in Millington, Tennessee, for the last year and works at a Navy recruiting command on-base a few times a month. She manages students who want to apply for medical, nursing and dental school.

Military service runs in McKown-Evans's family. Both of her brothers-in-law are in the military, and a few of her uncles have served in the Army and Navy. She met her husband, Devin Evans, at her first duty station. Devin was deployed to Afghanistan for nine months during the couple's first year of marriage in 2010. Devin has since adjusted to being a civilian nurse.

“He definitely shares my passion for the military, but he's also my greatest supporter,” she said.

The couple have two children together: Eli, 5, and Esther, 7.

“I get to go travel the world,” Shannon said. “I have a husband and two kids who love traveling with me, who've had great experiences as well. I have nothing but amazing things to say about joining the military, raising a family, being a mother in the military.”

“It just shows that I have been very successful in the military, I have done great things, and I was

higher you rise in the ranks.

“For her to be promoted to Lieutenant Commander, it's not just automatic,” Larson said. “She earned it.”

McKown-Evans plans to achieve Commander status before she retires from the military.

Her Northfield upbringing provided McKown-Evans with roots and the morals of where she stands today. She also credits Larson with helping her make her career choice.



**Larson completes the ceremonial process by placing the marking on McKown-Evans's shirt. (Sam Wilmes/Northfield News)**

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-Shannon McKown-Evans



**ABOVE:** McKown-Evans and her husband, Devin, pose in their military uniforms. The couple met while they were serving in the U.S. Navy. (Photo courtesy of Shannon McKown)

**LEFT:** McKown-Evans is seen in this picture receiving a Navy and Marine Corps achievement medal from a fellow military nurse. (Photo courtesy of Shannon McKown)

“He would always set a great example for me,” she said.

McKown-Evans is a part of the ever-increasing representation of women in the U.S. Military. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, when the draft ended in 1973, women represented an estimated 2 percent of the enlisted forces and 8 percent of the officer corps. Today, those numbers are 16 percent and 18 percent respectively.

According to the Council, the Air Force has traditionally had the highest percentage of female enlisted and officer personnel, but by 2016, the Navy had nearly caught up. In both services, approximately one in five enlisted members and officers are women. The Defense Department lifted all restrictions on the roles women can perform in the military in 2016.

Nurses in the Navy have many responsibilities and places where they practice. Nursing unit members practice at military treatment facilities around the world, during deployments and humanitarian aid missions, which could include taking part in humanitarian relief efforts like administering infant vaccinations in developing countries, or providing emergency care to natural disaster victims.

McKown-Evans lives her life with a Christian belief and is raising her two children with morals she says come from the faith.

Her father, Thomas McKown, is well-known in Northfield for putting together the Rock ‘N’ Roll Revival and has since moved to Florida.

McKown-Evans’ brother, Patrick, spoke highly of his sister’s career.

“I’m extremely proud of her ... Shannon has worked very hard in the Navy and she’s worked herself up very quickly,” he said. “So we are extremely proud of her. We are really, we’re all spread out now throughout the United States, so we’re really happy to come home and do this event here in Northfield.”

McKown-Evans has incorporated her passion for helping people with a desire to serve the country.

“Everyone has a different calling in life, and my definite calling was to join the military,” she said. “So if they feel a strong calling to join the military, I definitely think that doing so is an amazing experience.”

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