

Borne the Battle

Epsiode #140

Danny Chung- Marine Veteran, Chief of Staff, Microsoft Military Affairs

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/58878/borne-the-battle-140-danny-chung-marine-veteran-chief-of-staff-microsoft-military-affairs/>

Text Transcript Begins

[00:00] Music

[00:10] Opening Monologue Begins

(Tanner Iskra)

It's another great day in podcast land. April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Borne the Battle brought to you by the Department of Veteran's Affairs. I am your host, Marine Corps Veteran, Tanner Iskra. I hope you all had a good week, I had a pretty good week other than those dang allergies. Man it is allergy season out there and I am feeling it. And I don't know about y'all, but at the beginning of allergy season I'm always trying to fight it thinking that my natural body tendency is " Oh I got this and I can just drink some honey and I don't need no allergy medicine. I'm gonna handle this by myself." Uh no, don't do that. It's a bad move. And my wife blasts me every year that it happens so you know don't fight it go to CVS, go to your local position, go to the VA, get your...get a prescription for allergy medicine and take care of that trash. Wasn't trash too bad on the ratings lately that's a bad way to go so we are at 62% of our 100 rating and review goal. A couple of reviews came in this week West End AI said "what it lacks in polish it makes up for enthusiasm," Thank you, I think, 'The stories and interviews are always interesting despite their formulaic format.' Understand. The next review came from fireman 6061 'I really like the old host and the old format, I really like the new format and new host' thank you and Tim thanks you as well. A previous review note of this to be 'a bit formulaic, true, but not so much now content always interesting and I'm looking forward to many more installments.' Welcome to the show Tanner, hope you like the new job, Fireman 6061, I do enjoy this job and to West End AI I understand about some of the formulaic things about about this show, so we are actually going to

be adding some segments to this show one that is going to be focusing on people that are veterans themselves, but have a real deep-seated interest in helping veterans kind of like those Gary Sinise types out there. Also looking at coming up with more benefits-oriented episodes as well. Couple of episodes that are coming out that are pretty exciting, on the April 24th episode of Borne the battle we're going to have a Marine veteran who was a DEA inspector turned Postal Inspector, he is also a historian for the Marine Corps History Division and he's going to join us and clue us in on some of the mail scams that are currently targeting veterans and let us know some best practices to help protect ourselves. And on May 1st we're also going to have a Navy SEAL veteran Steven Holly, he is the president and CEO of Carry the Load, a nonprofit organization that provides a way to connect Americans to sacrifices made daily by our nation's military, veterans, first responders, and their families. He's going to be talking about the partnership this Memorial Day that they have with the VA National Cemetery Administration and they got a lot of things going on I got a relay that's over 11,000 it's over 11,000 miles of which they are stopping at over 25 of our national cemeteries are there a 20-hour Memorial Day Market Dallas Texas and the list goes on and on if you want to get involved or follow call the campaign you can find it, or them at [Carrytheload.org](http://Carrytheload.org) or [news.Carrytheload.org](http://news.Carrytheload.org). You can find their social media handles with Carrytheload or follow the campaign with the hashtag #noveteraneverdies, so thank you for the feedback, thank you the reviews, and as always you can reach out to me either through the review process on you know iTunes or Spotify or Stitcher wherever those reviews are or you can reach me at [podcast@va.gov](mailto:podcast@va.gov) directly and you know I would like to hear some feedback we always like to hear how the last episode did if you heard an episode and let me know what you liked, what you didn't like if you had a question about it maybe we can do a follow-up on the next episode for that. Couple news releases this week one is from the National Cemetery Administration says: For immediate release, VA acquires land to expand in the Black Hills National Cemetery the Department of Veteran Affairs National

Cemetery Administration announced today and this was released on April 11th that they have acquired 181.32 acres of land near Sturgis South Dakota, you know where the famous Sturgis bike rally is, expanding the Black Hills National Cemetery expanding Black Hills National Cemetery to ensure access to dignified veteran burial options to Veterans and their families as well into the future said undersecretary for Memorial Director, Randy Reeves. We will continue to establish New National cemeteries while maintaining National cemeteries with the goal of providing 95% of veterans with access to a burial option in a VA national, state, or tribal veterans cemetery within 75 miles of your home. It goes on and then it says prior to the expansion, Black Hills National Cemetery consisted of 105.90 acres of land, so this is more than doubling it. 96% of which had already been developed. More than 29,000 veterans, spouses, and eligible family members are interred there. The additional land will serve the project internment needs of veterans in Western South Dakota for the next 100 years after the current Black Hills National Cemetery space is depleted So it's at 96% percent and when it gets to one hundred percent, you've got another hundred years. So then it goes on and talks about the VA where how many national cemeteries, how many soldiers lost in monument sites and where they're all located. For more information you can always go to [www.va.gov/burials-memorials](http://www.va.gov/burials-memorials) or by calling VA Regional Office toll-free at one 1-800-827-1000 that's 800-827-1000 and as always to make burial Arrangements at any open VA National Cemetery at the time of need call the national cemetery scheduling office at one 1-800-535-1117 that's 1-800-535-1117. For more information about the Black Hills National Cemetery directly contact Carrie Corkins at 1 605-347-3830, 1- 605-347-3830 or visit [www.cem.va.gov/cem/cems/nchp/Black\\_Hills.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/cems/nchp/Black_Hills.asp). So this was released in 24 hours of this show being hosted and I'm reading this for the first time with you says for immediate release: VA ensures Veterans have same-day access to emergency Mental Health Care as part of the US Department of Veterans Affairs efforts to provide the best mental health care possible, VA is remaining veterans that it offers all veterans same-day access

to emergency, that's emergency Mental Health Care at any VA Health Care Facility across the country. Providing the same day 24-hour access to Mental Health crisis intervention, and support for veterans service members and their families is our top clinical priority said VA secretary Robert Wilkie. It's important that all veterans, their family and friends know that help is readily and easily available. VA's office of mental health and suicide prevention is the national leader in making high-quality mental health care in suicide prevention resources is available to Veterans and do a full spectrum of outpatient, inpatient, and Telemental] Health Services. In addition the VA has developed the national strategy for preventing it Veteran's suicide and there's a link in the end of the news release which reflects the department vision for a coordinated effort to prevent suicide among all service members and Veterans. This strategy reflect the VA's the views focus on a high-risk individuals, high-risk individuals inHealthcare setting adopting a broad public approach to Suicide Prevention. So it goes on and talks about some statistics and then it says better than crisis for those concerned about one, should call the veteran crisis line at 1-800-273-255 and press one or send a text message to 838-255 or chat online at Veterans' Crisis Line.net That's Veterans' Crisis Line.net veterans with a net Veterans Crisis Line.net. So if you saw the title of the episode you know that's a very technology-driven episode this week and it wouldn't be and it wouldn't feel right without talking about vet tech. Vet tech is a new five-year pilot program at that trains veterans in the skills needed by employers in the high-tech sector. VA is looking for training providers that's, that's the training providers to train veterans and computer software information science be the application data processing and computer program. VA pays program cost to the provider and Veterans can receive a housing stipend while in the program. Applications for the first year are open now for training providers who participate your facility must have been in operation for at least 2 years and have successfully provided your high-tech program for at least one year least one year. Veterans need one day that's only one day of Jekyll and Hyde on to apply and the training doesn't count against your

entitlement for more information go to the GI Bill website at [www.benefits.va.gov](http://www.benefits.va.gov)/GI Bill that's [www.benefits.va.gov](http://www.benefits.va.gov)/ GIBill and look for vet tech at the top of the page applications for the veterans applications for you veterans will open in early summer. All right so in this week's interview my microphone wasn't optimal however again it's not about my microphone the guest's microphone is crystal clear and he is a great example of a veteran that is found a way to give back to the transitioning veteran at any given time there are over five hundred thousand jobs in the computer industry through some research Microsoft has discovered that the current education system is producing only 49,000 computer science Majors a year Our guest's goal to fill the Gap with a 250000 service members that are in the military and joining the workforce in addition. His effort to combat the military spouses 18% unemployment and the 53% underemployment rate. He is Marine Corps veteran Danny Chung and he is the chief of staff for military affairs at Microsoft. Hope you enjoy the listen.

TI: We're here at Fort Meade Maryland, did you take a trip down memory lane here at all being an officer community officer here?

DC: Yeah, I certainly did. Drove by The Defense Information School, drove by the old barracks.

TI: What were you here for today?

DC: Yeah, so Microsoft runs several different programs and the purpose of today was to facilitate a Youth Spark program. So, Youth Spark is a one-day STEM activity that Microsoft has been putting together for the past seven years. And starting last year we began a Youth Spark for military kids and what that means is that we are bringing the one-day STEM activity to schools, to middle schools that are on or near military installations, specifically tailored to children of military families. And the reason we do that is because military families, as you know, as we both know, they are moving constantly, so a typical educational career for a military child they are moving six to nine times. And If you can imagine that awkward feeling when you go to a new school and you know, you've got your cafeteria lunch tray and you're wondering 'Who do I sit with,' 'Who are my friends,' 'What do I do.' I mean it's just really tough so for a military kid to do that six to nine times through his or her educational career is often tragic. And oftentimes they don't have the same resources available to them cause they're in remote locations, or they're overseas in different countries so they don't have some of the same resources that other

civilian children do. So, we are hoping to bring STEM activity to them, specifically tailored to them.

TI: For those that aren't in the high-tech world what is STEM?

DC: Yeah so, STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Basically, things that are related to technology. Coding, so some of the stuff that we teach them is, we start with the fundamentals like Minecraft, which is really a fun way of learning the fundamentals.

TI: Kids know that

DC: Yeah, what coding looks like. We also teach them how sharks swim. And through animation via computers, we teach them what yaw, pitch, and roll looks like for a shark. We also teach them how to make prosthetic hands and test it with nothing but Scotch tape, copper wires, and a few strings.

TI: This is in your one-day course?

DC: This is in the one-day course.

TI: You teach them how to make a prosthetic hand?

DC: Yeah, yeah.

TI: That's amazing. So, before this conversation when we were trying to lock it down you said you came back from out of the country was that part of your job?

DC: It was, so we partner with Hiring Our Heroes which is a US Chamber foundation, organization which was created back in 2012 and we partner with them to help evangelize military transition programs. So basically, we've got 250,000 transitioning service members on an annual basis. So just to be clear, we don't recruit military members to leave the military, we're simply helping those who have already decided to leave the military. Of which, there's a quarter million every year.

TI: Sure.

DC: So, a quarter million every year and then you look at 500,000 opening position at any open It at any given time and the school systems in America are only producing 49,000 computer science majors a year.

TI: Oh wow.

DC: So, if you do the math, we're never gonna reach fulfillment of those open positions. So what we're trying to do is to try and take the Veteran population and see if we can provide them some training that will allow them to better on ramp into meaningful careers in technology.

TI: Yeah, cause there's a huge gap there, that's a huge gap.

DC: And the gaps only growing, so if you look at fields like artificial intelligence and machine learning, people are forecasting that by the end of 2022, 2025, which is only three to five years away you're looking at thirty percent of the labor market being AI or learning machine specific.

TI: Anytime someone starts talking about AI it freaks me out.

DC: Freaks me out too.

TI: What is your take on Skynet?

(Both laughing)

DC: It is inevitable.

TI: So back to, moving away from Skynet, back to the military, what made you decide to join the military?

DC: Oh, me personally?

TI: Yeah.

DC: Oh my gosh, so let's go back in time here. Graduated high school by the skin of my teeth, and I do mean that by the skin of my teeth. I don't know how I graduated high school and didn't get accepted to any colleges, so I went to the local community college in southern California instead of going to class I ended up dating one of my professors needless to say it didn't work out very well. So, I thought, okay, got to do something with my life and I went to the local recruiting office and I met this gunnery sergeant who was a recruiter. His arms were the size of my legs and that's the only thing I remember about him. And I placed on stipulation in front of him and I said, 'If you can get me anywhere outside of southern California, the farther the better, I will sign on the dotted line today.' And he slaps me on the back and says 'Son, we're gonna send you to Okinawa. You're gonna love it there.' I said, 'Great,' signed the papers, went to boot camp in San Diego, thirteen of the most gruelling weeks of my life, received my orders and it said El Toro, California...

TI: Oh my gosh.

DC: So, I was basically sent right back home.

TI: So, you didn't go far at all.

DC: I did not, I was about thirty miles south of where I'd grown up. Worked at the Third Marine Air Wing as an Avionics technician for the for the first five years and met a really good mentor, Scott Stalder who kind of kicked me in the ass and said Chung, you need to go get a commission and I said 'What's a commission.' He said there's programs out here that you can become an officer and I applied for the ROTC scholarship once and did not get accepted.

Applied the second time, did not get accepted. And then he said, 'Well there's a program called

MECA Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program and got accepted. So I went to Oregon state, three and a half years working on battalion staff while holding a part time job while taking a full time course load. Graduated three years later, got a post as a public affairs officer.

TI: Hustlin'

DC: Yeah

TI: So, you went from Avionics to public affairs, was that a personal interest at the time?

DC: It wasn't, "I'm actually quite an introvert so if you think about what public affairs is, it's quite the opposite. But it was a field that I thought had a strong equivalency out in the civilian sector.

TI: Yeah

DC: And it was an interest of mine, so I thought I'd pursue it.

TI: You mentioned one staff sergeant, if I was to ask you if he was either A) Your friend, or your greatest mentor, would you say he was?

DC: He was probably my greatest mentor, my most pivotal mentor in my life really. He was the one person who, like I said he literally kicked me in the ass. And he told me I needed to do this, I was having fun as a land's corporal.

TI: Absolutely, didn't we all. So you became a public affairs officer and you served for how many years?

DC: Twenty-one total.

TI: Twenty-one total years, what was the impetus for leaving the service?

DC: At the twenty-year mark I'd basically done everything that I'd wanted to do. I'd served overseas in multiple different capacities on multiple joint staffs, joint operations, highlight of which was commanding the 377 MPAD in Iraq, which was a lot of fun,

TI: What was that? How was that fun?

DC: Well I mean, you think about the resources that are available to you, we don't even have MPADs in the Marine Corps, no Mobile Public Affairs Detachments. And then to suddenly be given all these resources, several humvees with, uh, what was the system they called the video editing system, I forget what it was called.

TI: AVID, the AVID systems

DC: Yeah, it had a full AVID system in there, it had a portable Scotty, briefcase with a portable laptop with a built-in camera, which today now you can do with your iPhone, but back then there was none of that. So, to have that and to have an entire platoon plus of journalists and videographers and reporter-combat correspondents and to be put into a combat operation was just the highlight of my career.

TI: Sure, so towards the end you became the commanding officer and that's when I first met you. You were our commanding officer, but that was your final duty station.

DC: That was, that was my twilight tour, my last three years right here at Fort Meade at the Defense Information School, first year and a half I should say as the commanding officer for the Marine Detachment, and then the remaining year and a half as a professor teaching the public affairs leadership course.

TI: Oh, so you left that bill as the CO of the detachment and actually taught?

DC: I did, I did. I actually taught throughout and actually taught as an adjunct as they called it. I have a passion for teaching, I love teaching, I love mentoring, I love molding you now, young Marines and I just really enjoyed it.

TI: Is that how or why you found yourself in your position now.

DC: It's actually not, it's actually quite a strange story. I thought at the age of forty or I guess I was actually forty-one by then, I thought I was marketable, and the Marine Corps was dangling the next promotion in front of me and it would incur a five-year obligation. Duty station of my choice, so I thought about it and then when you think about what happened in 2011 the Great Recession, unemployment rate. I mean all of this was happening in real time for me during my transition. So, by 2010 when I had officially left the Marine Corps.

TI: Yeah.

DC: The unemployment rate for veterans was somewhere around twenty six percent and the unemployment rate for civilians I believe was in the teens as well. So, it wasn't a good time to get out and like a knucklehead I decided I was gonna draw papers and get out anyways. And I thought I really could cause like I said there's such and equivalency to public affairs out in the public sector and I was fortunate. Got a pretty sweet gig down in D.C. managing media relations for financial firms like Schwab, mutual fund companies out of Texas were some of my clients and that was a lot of fun. I got into government contracting for a few years. Then went to Southern California Edison, the electric utility company of southern California, running their crisis communications desk. And then one day I got a call from Microsoft.

TI: Like out of the blue?

DC: Like out of the blue, like I was in a crisis mode, California Public Utility Commission breathing down on my neck and this young lady from Microsoft calls me and she just started blabbering about something and I thought she was trying to sell me software. She calls me back in like five, ten minutes and she says Mr. Chung we'd just like to interview you, I said , 'Interview me for what?' she says well we have a job down at the crisis communication desk and we think you'd be a great fit. So, did the phone interview, got invited back for an in-person interview, my wife was dead set against it.

TI: Oh really, why is that?

DC: Cause we're living in California, we had a beautiful house, you know life was good.

TI: She didn't want any part of the Seattle rain.

DC: Well not so much the rain, just the fact that we had been moving so often even after I had left the Marine Corps was kind of getting to her when she thought we could plant some roots. And I told her 'Nah, I'll just go up there for a Friday, I'll spend a Saturday visiting my cousin and I'll be back they probably aren't even gonna hire me. A full day of interviews on Friday before I even got back to the hotel, I had an offer in hand. It was a pretty sweet offer, so we decided to move. From crisis communications about a year into that gig this position that I'm in now as the Chief of Staff for Military Affairs opened up

TI: Ok.

DC: And I jumped on that so, and what we do at military affairs at Microsoft is we host our, we run programs for transitioning service members,

TI: That's great. Let me know, what are some of the programs you run, you've talked about STEM with kids in school here on military bases. What are some of the other programs that Microsoft does?

DC: Yeah, so about five years ago we're looking at the high unemployment rate for veterans we're looking at the hundreds of thousands of open tech positions and we thought okay there's a formula here, how are we gonna crack this and we developed an eighteen week academy called Microsoft Software and Systems Academy. And what we do is we allow the service member to sit in this eighteen-week course during the last six months of their service time. So, Tanner, if you've got six months left as a Marine instead worrying about BDUs and combat boots your commander can authorize you to sit in the classroom and prepare for your transition. And during your eighteen weeks we not only teach you the technology fundamentals in order to succeed in the tech industry, but we also teach you the soft skills, the corporate skills how to interview, how to write your resume, how to dress for an interview, how to negotiate your salary once you get an offer, and how to make that transition successful.

TI: So, it's like a TAPs class on steroids, focusing on the high-tech sector?

DC: It is, it is.

TI: And is that a relationship you have with each branch of the service that they can?

DC: Yeah, so not to get too much into the weeds, but yeah, we did have to formulate an MLU with each of the service branches, and I got to tell you the Army was in the lead, the Army was all over it. Installation command gave us a blanket authorization for all their bases, so they were really in the lead. So JBLM Joint Base Lewis-McChord was the first place that really kicked it off and then the Marines followed suit very closely, so we've got programs at Oceanside Camp Pendleton, Lejeune, Quantico, other army installations, Campbell, Benning, Bragg. We're also gonna open up Schofield, Schofield Barracks in Hawaii on May 30th, so that's when the ribbon cutting is. So, from coast to coast, including Hawaii we've got fifteen locations and again the service member can get authorization to take this course while they're in the military still.

TI: Okay.

DC: So, what that means is...

TI: Is this like in their off time or is this full time, eight hours?

DC: No, it's during the day at full time. Eight o'clock to 4:00PM

TI: And they can find this at their education centers.

DC: They can find information at their education centers, they can find information at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, who's our educational partner or Saint Martin's University for the state of Washington

TI: Okay.

DC: The easiest way to do it to just go to [military.microsoft.com](http://military.microsoft.com) and we've got the MSSA there. We also run the MSTA, which is the Military Spouse Technology Academy, we just piloted that last year and graduated all nineteen students

TI: Oh, wow.

DC: Eighteen female and one male military spouse, very similar to MSSA, but it's specifically tailored for the needs of a military spouse. So, one who typically has to care for the children, if they have children, so we instead of starting the program at 8:00 AM we start at 9:00, so they have time to drop the kiddos off at daycares. We also end a little bit earlier at three o'clock, so they have time to pick them up. We give them days off when their service members have days off so that they can maximize their family time.

TI: Okay.

DC: And the whole program runs twenty-two weeks and we piloted that just outside of JBLM and we're hoping to expand that.

TI: Wow, what about those that aren't on base? Have you guys developed anything for veterans that have been out for per say three to five years, or this has been out for twenty years and you know a veteran who wants to get into technical...?

DC: No, we actually, we have. One of the things that we're working on outside of these programs is the reskilling of the American workforce, so if you're in my generation...

TI: Like long hauling, long hauling is gonna go away in the next five years with automated cars or automated trucks.

DC: Perhaps, but what's strange about that is, it's strange that you brought that up cause the trucking industry is in desperate need of student, uh of drivers.

TI: Okay.

DC: And there's a program out there called Troops to Transport or Troops to Trucks, Troops to Transport I think, and they'll put you through a four or six-week course and they'll pay you and they'll give you housing. They, they run a fantastic program and I think starting salary is somewhere around 60,000 dollars.

TI: Not bad.

DC: And they'll get you started right away.

TI: Wow.

DC: And this isn't the long haul, this isn't like L.A. to New York City, these are local. So your home with your family.

TI: Oh wow.

DC: So just to be clear, MSSA is just but one career skills program out of a whole list. Troops to Transport is another one, you know there's just a whole bunch, there's just a whole bevy of them. We do open the programs up for veterans, honorably discharged vets on a space available basis. So, our classes typically range anywhere from about a dozen students up to about twenty-five, depending on location, depending on classroom size, but if there's space available, veterans can and often do attend out course.

TI: And that's the MSSA?

DC: That's the MSSA course. Again, fifteen locations, coast to coast, we've put through about 1,300 students so far. Ninety three percent success rate, career employment, making on average anywhere between 75 to 95 thousand dollars.

TI: That's great.

DC: And these are companies like Microsoft, I mean, we are twenty five percent of our graduates. Facebook, Google, HP, Amazon...

TI: They're all looking at this course.

DC: They're all taking students from our course, and we don't charge anybody a dime.

TI: You don't charge anybody a dime?

DC: We don't. Microsoft does not generate a single dime of profit.

TI: So, they're looking to hire some people and they're looking to put veterans into the industry. So, this MSSA course isn't a G.I. Bill thing, this isn't a...

DC: So, it's not a hundred percent free. Microsoft doesn't charge a dime, there is a tuition fee of about 4,000 to 5,000 dollars that goes directly to Embry-Riddle University or Saint Martin's.

TI: Oh, okay.

DC: And it's because they offer eighteen accredited hours out of this program, so you do get eighteen accredited hours and the four to five thousand dollars goes directly to that. So when I say ninety three percent are employed, the remaining percentage, a large portion of the remaining percentage are students who are continuing to pursue their computer science degree.

TI: Okay, alright.

DC: And it is covered by G.I. Bill if you choose to use the G.I. Bill.

TI: In this role at Microsoft, since you've transitioned, what is one thing you've learned in service that you continue to use today?

DC: That people matter. Ultimately it's not the job, it's not the numbers, it's not the strategic goal our your vision or mission, but it's about the people along the way. And that's what is so fulfilling

about this job is that everyday I meet people who are going through these programs, or who's kids are going through our STEM activity camp and we're making a tangible difference in their lives. When you think about the veteran community and all they've done to serve our nation, it is incredible the sacrifice that they've made, that we've made and to think that the unemployment rate is so incredibly high after they leave the military, or it was and now it's very low. I mean when you talk about close to twenty percent unemployment rate, and by the way the military spouse community, they are still facing a thirty percent unemployment rate right now.

TI: To this day.

DC: To this day. Thirty percent and those who are employed, fifty percent are underemployed. So you've got people with advanced degrees, military spouses with advanced degrees certifications up the wall.

TI: We've all met those spouses...

DC: They're incredible, and they're sitting behind a cash register at Walmart or serving coffee as a barista, and there is nothing wrong with those jobs, what I'm saying is their level of expertise, of experience, and credentials are not commensurate with those jobs.

TI: Yeah cause they're in Fayetteville or they are in Jacksonville and those jobs just aren't there.

DC: Or they are moving in two to three years and businesses are just not willing to give them an opportunity, which is also a crime. When you think about the new landscape today, Millennials are jumping jobs every two to three years anyways. How is that different from what military spouses have to?

TI: Sure, a couple episodes ago I talked to the military relations manager at Koch Industries, and you can find that episode in the archives. He talked about the internal part of Koch and once they hired a military veteran on, there is training not only for the veteran to assimilate into the civilian world, there is also training within that company on 'This is a veteran, this is something you have to consider when hiring one.' Is Microsoft doing something similar?

DC: In one of the eighteen weeks, in addition to the technical instructions, in addition to the corporate skills, we assign them a mentor, a mentor who is already working at Microsoft.

TI: Okay.

DC: So on a weekly basis they check in, it's a safe space where they can ask questions, the mentor can check in on the students and make sure he or she is progressing along and is on the path to success and that relationship is formed over eighteen weeks. So as you can imagine they get to know each other pretty well.

TI: Sure.

DC: If they decide to get hired at Microsoft, if they accept an offer from Microsoft, if they come in and join our ranks we keep that relationship in tact for the next twelve months, it's optional for them obviously, we don't force it upon them. Cause we don't wanna force them out of the relationship.

TI: 'I don't really like this sergeant, yeah well guess what, you're stuck with him.'

(Both laughing)

DC: It's not the military, it's Microsoft. We're trying to be friendlier.

TI: Sure, sure.

DC: So if they are both willing thy can continue this mentor relationship for the next twelve months, and what we've found is that really helps them on board into the company and helps them assimilate and learn the culture.

TI: That's awesome.

DC: The other thing we do is we have an ERG, an Employee Resource Group and I remember my first day of Microsoft when I got introduced to the ERG via email and my inbox was just getting flooded from people I didn't know from all over the world, who were veterans from Microsoft just welcoming me on board, asking me if I needed help in doing this or that. I remember there was a dozen of them that gave me tips on how to, on what I should do with, what is my health savings account and how to navigate that whole thing and they were tremendously helpful in how I onboarded into Microsoft.

TI: We've, you and I've talked extensively about transitioning. You've mentioned that you've been out for nine years and you're still transitioning.

DC: Yeah, people ask me how my transition went and I tell them I'm still going through it man. It's you know, I miss it. I miss it. It's been almost a decade and I still miss it. So when I'm walking through the airport and I see a Marine in that uniform or even a soldier, or any service branch and I make a B line and ask them 'Hey how's it going, what's going on, where you headed to?' and one of my favorite, uh one of the things I enjoy doing is, I also sit on the USO board so one of the things I really enjoy...

TI: So like the USO board, like big board BSO.

DC: So for the Pacific Northwest.

TI: Oh, okay.

DC: For the Pacific Northwest.

TI: Got you, got you.

DC: And uh, so one of the things I enjoy doing is stopping by the USO at every airport and to stop by and just chat up some of the service members. They probably think I'm weird for talking to them, but it's pretty cool.

TI: I can sympathize though, cause sometimes I feel like I'm the same way though cause I think once you enjoy mentoring you're still gonna try to mentor those same, that same age group.

DC: I would call it less mentoring and more therapy for me.

(Both laughing)

TI: So, you're kind of in a quasi-private, quasi-non profit almost. Is there a true non profit in the veteran space that's exciting you, or a veteran? Is there a non profit out there that you're looking at them and like they're doing really good stuff?

DC: Yeah, there's, I don't know if you know this but there's 49,000 veteran support organizations out there. 49,000.

TI: That's a lot.

DC: And that is a lot. And I remember when I got out in 2010 there was nothing. I mean it was a desolate desert, there was no Hiring Our Heroes, there was no veteran support organization. So today you've got all these organizations and just to name a few, that really are on the top of my list are Hiring Our Heroes and The US Chamber Foundation. They've really been paving the way in getting the word out and helping service members get on LinkedIn and get their resumes together and connect with companies through their fellowship programs, connect to companies through programs like the ones that Microsoft runs. Other organizations include Team Red, White, and Blue, Nationwide running organization that really they are the essence of what community means. So when we leave the military I'm telling you right now I miss it, but to go back and put my Team Red, White, and Blue shirt on and to go back and go on a short run with these guys and gals and share a beer after the run, I mean that is the physical manifestation of what community means. And then you've got other organizations like Blue Star Family that are doing all the grunt work behind the scenes for military families, for the military spouse community. They're the ones who are doing the surveys, they're the ones who are pushing the policies. They're the ones who are advocating on behalf of the military spouses worldwide. So those are the three that are really at the top of my mind.

TI: Gotcha, I think before Tim left he interviewed a lot of Team Red, White, and Blue members for our listeners if you want to learn more about Team Red, White, and Blue be sure to check out [nrrarchives](#). Danny is there something I haven't asked that you'd like to add. Something that I'm not even thinking about?

DC: Yeah, I think right now the top of my priority is really the military spouse piece and it's not a philanthropic effort, it's not a feel good effort, but it's a national security effort. And what I mean by that is, the research I've done on that and the research the Blue Star Families has done, the research that Hiring Our Heroes has conducted for the military spouse community has indicated that the quality of life is diminishing and because they can't, they're unable to maintain a dual income, military families are less likely to remain in the military for a career. And if you think about our all volunteer force and you think about the work they are doing now and the high operational tempo that they've got already, and then you carry that timeline out three to five years into the future and you think about the difficulties and the challenges our military families are having those numbers are going to continue to dwindle and I firmly believe those numbers are a national security issue. And unless we get behind the national military spouse community

to bring their unemployment numbers down, to provide them opportunities for meaningful, long term careers, that we're gonna continue to face this problem.

[40:10] Music

[40:18] P.S.A.

Man: My grandfather served in World War II. Spending time with him were the best memories of my life. I became a physician at VA because of my grandfather, so I can help others like him. I can't imagine working with better doctors or a more dedicated staff. I'm fulfilling my life's mission with the help of my team and thanks to these Veterans. I'm proud to be a doctor at VA and proud to honor my grandfather every day. Search VA careers to find out more.

[40:49] Music

[40:56] Closing Monologue

TI: Ending that is our career oriented week. I want to thank Danny for coming on the show and giving us his time and telling us what the Microsoft Software and Systems Academy is and where we can find it and telling us what the MMSTA Microsoft Military Spouse Technology Academy is and where we can find that as well. Really excited to see where those are going. If you wanna find out more about these programs you can always like Danny said find them at [military.microsoft.com](http://military.microsoft.com). If this helps one person get signed up to it and gets trained in the industry I'll count this episode a success. And if you have any questions about this episode you can always email this show at [podcast.va.gov](mailto:podcast.va.gov) and we will do our best to point you in the right direction. This weeks Borne the Battle Veteran of the Week is Richard "Dick" Cole. Four months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. Eighty Army Corps members volunteered for a top secret mission to bomb targets in Japan. Lieutenant Colonel James "Jimmy" Doolittle was the famed air racer, test pilot, and aeronautical engineer and he was tapped to lead that group. His copilot was then twenty six year old Lieutenant Richard E. better known as Dick, Cole. It was a risky mission that took place on April 18th, 1942. The Doolittle raid marked the first time that bombers attempted to take off from a carrier. The first carrier that they took off from was the U.S.S Hornet and as the first plane to take off, Dick and Doolittle's plane had the least amount of runway. However, they made and after bombing Tokyo, Dick and Doolittle's B-22 caught a tailwind that helped the crew make it to China cause they didn't have enough gas. He was rescued by Chinese patriots who helped him and their raiders make it home. As of this week, Dick was the last member of the Doolittle raid sadly Dick passed away on Tuesday, April 9th, 2019 at the age of a hundred and three. We honor your service Dick.

That's it for this episode of the show. As always we are on social media we are on the vantage point website at [blogs.va.gov/depvetaffairs](https://blogs.va.gov/depvetaffairs), US Department of Veterans Affairs, you can always find us on any given social media at any given day with that blue check mark. Again, thanks for listening, I really hope transitioning veterans got something out of this episode and if you did let us know at [podcast.va.gov](https://podcast.va.gov). I will see you next week.

[43:26] Music

TEXT TRANSCRIPT ENDS