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Portia Stagge is Afghanistan bound

St. Louis - Cartographic Technician Portia Stagge is en route to a voluntary six-month deployment to Afghanistan. It will be her first trip overseas and her journey one-third of the way around the world will take her to work in Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city and the capital of the province that bears its name.

There, Stagge has been told she will be engaged in GIS (Geographic Information Systems – the merging of data and mapping technology) work, much like what she does for the St. Louis District. But Portia is quick to point out that she is eager to take on any kind of work that needs to be done. "I have deployed to Fort Worth and New Orleans, and in both places I found that my opportunities expanded rapidly and I got to take on unforeseen tasks simply because I was willing to do so."

A native St. Louisan, Portia was graduated from Beaumont High School there in 1981. She has attended the University of Missouri in St. Louis, Sanford Brown University and the University of Phoenix as well.

"When I first applied to deploy," Stagge said, "they didn't realize at first that I am actually an intern with the Corps of Engineers. I have been in the District for 13 years, but 12 years of that was as a contractor. But my resume carried the day and now I'm one of two interns who are deploying to Afghanistan," she added.

Portia Stagge is leaving three sons at home. Shaun, her oldest son, is a software support specialist for a local firm, while her next son Brandon joined the Air Force in May. Her youngest son Justin is in high school and will stay with relatives while Portia is deployed.

Why is she deploying around the world? "I love new experiences and working outside of my normal work," she said. This is a great opportunity to broaden my background, to learn new things, to meet new people and to make a difference," she said.

Portia, who said that she has the opportunity to take on this kind of assignment now that her children are older, noted that she loves variety in her work and staying busy. "I thrive on deadlines and will stay at the task until it's done," she noted with pride.

From St. Louis she will fly to Winchester, Va., for processing, equipping and training before starting her journey eastward. She expects to return in June.

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