

# Auxiliary women hear interesting program

On March 7, the American Legion Auxiliary #352 met at 2 p.m. at the American Legion Hall in Bird City. There were 13 present.

For the program, Hulda had brought some articles about women in the service. One of these articles was about Jas Boothe, a disabled Army veteran, who gave 13 years of service to this great nation. She deployed during the Operation Iraq Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom campaigns, and her military career has been dedicated to working with and advocating for soldiers and their family members.

In 2005, she was a single parent in the Army Reserves, living in New Orleans. That spring, she learned she would soon be deploying to Iraq. During her mobilization, her life was torn apart by two significant events. In August, she lost everything she owned due to Hurricane Katrina. She tried to shift her focus to her platoon that was counting on her for leadership through deployment. The very next month, in September, she received a devastating diagnosis of an aggressive head, neck, and throat cancer, and was now unable to deploy.

Her options were limited, and posed some very hard choices. Because of her illness, she was facing discharge from the military, but she needed complex full-time medical care, a job, and a place to live with her young son. When searching for what assistance might be available, she was told there were no existing programs for female veterans with children, and that she should explore welfare and social services as an option, just like every other single mother.

Jas then realized that America had forgotten about the women who have served, fought, bled, and died along side their male counterparts. She found these options unacceptable for a woman who had honorably served her country, and after extensive cancer treatment at Brooke Army Medical Center, including radiation therapy that left life-long side effects, she was

able to stay in the Reserves, and immediately began looking for full-time employment and a place for she and her son to live.

In 2005, she relocated to Missouri with her aunt, where she had accepted a job offer from the Army National Guard. Later in the year, she received an opportunity to return to full-time duty in Washington, D.C. She never forgot what she and her son had been through, and was determined to ensure her fellow sister veterans had a resource in their time of need. She founded Final Salute Inc. in November, 2010, as part of her commitment to "Never Leave a Fallen Comrade". Final Salute Inc. has assisted over 150 women veterans and children, and now operated 3 transitional homes in Alexandria, Va., Martinsburg, W.Va., and Columbus, Ohio.

This was interesting to us as most of us never thought about women veterans being homeless. It really opened our eyes to see a need.

The other article was about an accomplished pianist trading piano keys for camouflage as a soldier in Afghanistan. Anne Pyungan Cho grew up in Korea, and at age 5 fell in love with playing the piano. She had a knack for playing, with natural talent for sight-reading music, and would often play piano at her church.

After immigrating to the U. S. in her late teens, she attended Union High School in Santa Monica and, by her senior year, was considering applying for Julliard at the request of an instructor. But her family insisted she stay close at home while her grandmother was battling breast cancer.

Anne decided to pursue a music scholarship at Pepperdine University instead, and managed to secure an audition. The day of her audition, she had prepared two pieces to play before the music professors, but the response was less than enthusiastic. Before she left, however, another professor handed her a piece to play for the group. It was one that she hadn't seen before and was considered a complicated piece. "When they

asked me to play some more songs, I was like, sure. I'll just do some sight-reading, which the professor didn't know was my strength," said Ms. Cho.

She nailed the piece perfectly, then another, and another, as the professors eagerly fed her music books. "Everyone changed their minds" she said. "They were clapping, they were saying, 'You are the pianist we are looking for.' And then I got the full-ride

to Pepperdine."

But at the age of 30, Spc. Anne Pyungan Cho joined the Army, and was deployed to Afghanistan to work as an automated logistics specialist and supply clerk at Kandahar Airfield. Her decision to trade in evening gowns and concert halls for Army fatigues and the landscape of a war-torn country is one that she says is layered with her love of music, desire to give back to the U. S.

Armed Forces, as well as her faith.

Every Sunday, with her own free time, she leads the worship for three different services and practices with the choir on Wednesday and Saturday nights, although fighting might put these on hold. She said she hope that she is able to help provide fellow service members with some peace and comfort. "I'm enjoying playing music here,"

said Ms. Cho. "Music is really strong--it can move people, it can encourage people."

These articles were really interesting to the group. If you are eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary, we would love to have you join our group. We meet on the first Friday of each month at 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Hall in Bird City, Kansas.



**SPRING IS COMING!** These geese were caught in flight several days ago. It has been a cold winter and most people are looking for any sign of spring.

*Herald staff photo by Tim Burr*

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