



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **RESERVIST MAKES HOLIDAYS BRIGHTER FOR CHARLESTON SECURITY FORCES**

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. -- One reservist here makes it easier for the 437<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron members to endure the long holiday workday on Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day.

Staff Sgt. Charlene Lowe, 315<sup>th</sup> Mission Support Squadron, began cooking meals with her mother, Gwen Lowe, for the gate guards at Charleston AFB in 1995, when she joined the Reserve.

"My brother is active duty in the Air Force, and he is usually stationed away for the holidays," said Lowe. "Since my mom (who lives in the local area) and I are so used to cooking for a big family, we cook too much food. I started out just making a couple of extra plates for the guards at the gates."

Lowe said when she found out that other members of 437 SFS would not be at home for the holidays, it made her upset.

"It just broke my heart to know that someone was not going to get just a little bit of home," said Lowe. "So we made 11 more plates."

After the events of Sept. 11, 2001, more security was added to patrol CAFB. The number of security forces members who would not be at home for Thanksgiving grew, and Lowe and her mother ended up cooking for more than 70 people.

Lowe and her mother purchased all of the food, except for the turkeys, which the squadron provided.

Then Christmas came.

"The greatest thing was when I called my mom, she said without hesitation, 'Listen Char, I have a little extra money to contribute, tell them we can do it, yeah, we can do it,'" said Lowe. "I had tears in my eyes because it touched me so much that she would be willing to give up Christmas too. I would not have been able to do any of this without her. She is truly an awesome lady and Air Force mom."

So 100 plates were made. Lowe said they were so tired, they forgot to make plates for themselves and had to search for a roll or piece of turkey for their own plates.

Lowe said most of the food they provide to the hungry airmen is made from scratch. Turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, string beans and much more goes onto every plate.

This year, the 437 SFS donated food and money to the cause. An airman already started shopping for the meal. The apartment complex Lowe lives in allowed her to use ovens around the complex to cook up the turkeys. A local grocery store provided the bags for the plates. Lowe's military supervisor donated vegetables this year, and purchased the containers every year before.

"We have been blessed to have such great folks help us," said Lowe. "Lord willing, we will do this every year. I think it has become a tradition at our house as well as on base. (The 437 SFS) called me this year before I could call them."

Two months into her stint as first sergeant of the 437 SFS, Master Sgt. Sheri Oulton said she was rounding people up to cook the Thanksgiving meal and was promptly told that there were two ladies who cooked the meal every year.

Oulton said Lowe thanked her for allowing the family the opportunity to prepare the meal for Oulton's troops, and insisted on making the meal again this year.

"It's nice to know there are people left like that in the world," said Oulton. "Those people who do something thoughtful and expect nothing in return; you don't run into many people like this anymore."

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The former maintenance worker said she thought she had it bad working the long hours maintenance requires.

"I used to think we worked all the time unless it was a wing down day," said Oulton. "I never realized until I came to security forces that there is no such thing as a down day for them. This place is in operation 365 days a year. The troops usually work 13 hours a day, it's nice that someone thinks of them."

Gwen, is pleased for the chance to make a few military members a little better off during their workday. "I am so thankful for the opportunity to cook for our military members, and I pray that God will give them the strength to carry out their duties," she said.

**(Story by Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Amy Perry. This story is public domain. You may use any part of it for your publication or newscast. Interviews are available with key base personnel on this project. For more information, please call Capt. Krista Carlos at (843) 963-5589 or Staff Sgt. Jason Smith at 963-5537.)**

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