



## Meet an Air Guard Member

### Elly Solberg

Marketing major, North Dakota State University  
Member, North Dakota Air National Guard

As a Fargo North High School senior, Elly considered her future options, “including the financial side,” she recalls. “I talked with an ND Air Guard recruiter at school and later visited the Fargo base. I knew it was a good path for me.”

When Elly shared her decision with her parents, her mom, Kim, was somewhat hesitant. Dad, Dan, was supportive and proud.

Dan is a Happy Hooligan himself. He enlisted as an NDSU student, had a civilian career and has now had several positions in his full-time Air Guard career. Elly’s grandfather, several uncles and six cousins also serve in the Air Guard or U.S. Marine Corps.

### Financially independent at age 22

“I definitely didn’t push her to the Air Guard,” Dan says. “But it’s been a great experience for her. She will graduate from college debt-free with valuable experience and a great group of friends. In fact, Elly bought a condo, remodeled it and is financially independent. How many parents can say that about their 22-year-old?”

“I did go to lots of family events at the base while I was growing up,” Elly says. “But it’s something else to see yourself serving there.”

Kim adds, “It’s one thing to have a husband in the Air Guard, but having your daughter join is altogether different. We’re so happy she did it all on her own. She has grown in confidence and skills, and now has a wide range of opportunities.”

### The “right” friend group

“Elly really enjoys her fellow Guard members. They have a great connection to each other and she is surrounded by the type of young people parents would choose for their kids’ friends,” Kim explains.

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## Advice to other parents

“I encourage other parents to learn as much as you can about the ND Air Guard,” Kim urges. “Talk with recruiters, visit the base and talk with other parents to learn about the commitment, opportunities, benefits and options.”

Dan adds, “There are many misconceptions. Often, parents assume there’s a high probability their child will be in armed combat. This is simply not true about the vast majority of jobs performed by Air Guard personnel. Intel is a perfect example of this. Our jobs are performed on a computer, not a battlefield.”

## Something for everyone

“Another misconception is the Air Guard decides your career. For the most part, recruits get to choose their careers before enlisting. A few roles involve carrying a weapon for those interested in that type of work, but the majority are not combat related. People don’t realize the Air Guard has everything from cooks to firefighters to finance specialists. There is something for almost everyone,” Dan continues.

***“Our daughter has gained incredible confidence and endless opportunities—while earning money and without paying tuition.”***

-Kim Solberg, mom to ND Air Guard member and NDSU student, Elly

## Overseas only if you choose

One more thing many parents think is their child will be sent overseas. As Dan explains, “While we do have people overseas, almost every one of them has gone voluntarily. It’s a great chance to see a part of the world you may never otherwise see—and get paid while doing it. The chance an Airman will be involuntarily deployed overseas is very small. I have been in for 28 years and I know of no ND Air Guard Airman who was sent overseas involuntarily.”

Elly has a word of advice for high school students: “Visit with recruiters from ND Guard, as well as active duty military branches, and visit the Fargo base. You can bring your parents, too. That’s how you all learn about the options,” Elly says.

## “My time has been fantastic”

From her Basic Training in Texas to technical training, then on-the-job training and now throughout her college years, Elly has appreciated her fellow classmates, opportunities to travel and endless options for current and future roles. While earning her degree in marketing, she also chose to work part time on the base in intelligence. One of her co-workers there? Her dad.

He says, “Elly and her fellow Guard members are involved in lots of research, critical analysis and training to think outside inherent biases. That experience will serve them well wherever they go from here.”

## “No limits”

Elly has always been interested in fashion and design, and she admits her major is a bit more rare for her fellow Air Guard members. “I learned there are no limits on what you can do in the Air Guard and no limits on careers for your future. Since my mom is a graphic designer and my dad is part of the ND Air Guard, I’ll get to combine both for my own future.”

## Joining big sis

Elly’s younger sister, Ana, has also joined the ND Air Guard, and her family is eager to see which opportunities she chooses in her adventures.

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