**aPHR Testimony**

**What is my background?**  I'm currently a Human resources SGT with the Connecticut Army National Guard with 19 /12 years of service aiming to be one of the youngest Soldiers to retire with 20 years of service. I enlisted in the National Guard in early 1998 at age 17 and I've been a Federal Technician since 2001. I'm currently married with three children. I deployed once in support of OIF.

**Why did I get the HR certification?** I got my aPHR because I'm about 7 months away from retirement and I needed something that would make me more marketable upon retirement. Unfortunately, I only currently possess a high school diploma. I made the decision to transfer all of my educational benefits to my family members who years ago were attempting to get degrees which were very expensive to attain. I knew that my tuition waivers were going to financially get them a long way and help them achieve something I couldn’t and didn't achieve for myself. This decision saved my family several thousand dollars in tuition fees I couldn’t afford and I would easily make this decision again if the choice was given to me.

**How does the certification help you in your current role?** **How do you think it will help in future roles?** As a federal technician, this certification should definitely help me in my role and in attaining a higher position and pay with another federal agency. Together with my 19-20 years of experience, the knowledge I gained from this certification course should go a long way in terms of resume building and even a job interview.

**How did you prepare for the exam? For how long?** I studied for the exam for about 3 months. I followed the aPHR ten week study plan and put in about 2 hours every week day into reading the lessons in the book, listening to audio files on the thumb drive and viewing the online study lectures and reviewing flash cards. On the weekends I attempted to double my study time while still participating in family activities. I had a few weeks where I had to go away on training so I had to put the studying on hold but I picked it up on the back end. I scheduled my exam date two weeks after my final week of studying and spent another two weeks reviewing the entire course and my problem areas before taking the exam.

**What surprised me most about the preparation process? About the exam?** The preparation process was extremely tough. I really didn’t like reading as it's not one of my best ways to learn. Also, "life" took its opportunity and got in the way whenever it could. After week five I became a bit unmotivated to study because I found myself missing out on a lot of family activities. I had to assure my family that the time I had to study for this certification was worth it and that I would make it up to them after I passed my exam. In terms of the exam, it was HARD. It hit me hard right off the bat and didn’t let up for 2 hours, it felt like I wasn’t taking the actual aPHR exam and I was taking something much harder. The material I studied was great and it gave me a body of knowledge and prepared me to pass but I had to take it the rest of the way. Test taking skills audio files saved my life. I knew that if I failed, it was on me and not the course content.

**What career advice would you give your younger self?** Don't change anything. It's going to be ok. The HR field is great and a career in the military is a great career with a multiple variety of great benefits, like being able to take an HR certification course at no charge!

Very Respectfully,

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HR Specialist (Information Systems)