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Army spouse, social worker sets sights on citizenship, career as Navy officer

February 8, 2013

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Malika Moretti, an Army spouse, became an American citizen, Jan. 22. Currently a licensed clinical social worker associate in Tripler Army Medical Center's Department of Social Work, Malika hopes to commission into the Navy and continuing to help military families in need.

HONOLULU -- It was only a few years ago that Malika Moretti took steps to change her life.

In 2012, the former stay-at-home mother finished grad school. She reached her dream of becoming an American citizen in January. Now, she's on her way to reaching another goal: becoming a Navy officer.

Born in Poland and raised in Denmark and Germany, Malika moved to the United States in 2001 to follow her heart and husband, Sgt. 1st Class Christian Moretti, Soldier Readiness Processing Site noncommissioned officer in charge, U.S. Army Health Clinic-Schofield Barracks.

After serving her country by supporting her husband's military career and caring for their two children, Aiden and Maya, Malika followed the advice of a friend and started college in 2007. She earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology and a Master of Social Work over the next six years.

Having put in her dues as a military spouse, Malika continued to show her unwavering support for the armed forces by choosing a military concentration while working towards her master's degree from the University of Southern California.

Because of her concentration and desire to work in the military community, USC assisted with placing Malika at Tripler Army Medical Center for one of her required field assignments.

According to USC's Master of Social Work Virtual Academic Center, field education is an integral part of the curriculum, providing students hands-on opportunities to observe and participate in learning about clients, agencies and communities relevant to their emerging skills.

"I wanted to do something that allowed me to work with people and not to be restrained behind a desk," Malika said.

Malika found her niche in Tripler's Department of Social Work. Currently working as a licensed clinical social worker associate, she along with others from the Family Advocate Program are embedded with U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii's Directorate of Emergency Services' military police station at Schofield Barracks.

Malika participates in the Schofield Barracks Military Police Initiative Program, a program

that aims to reach at-risk families at the time of an incident, which allows her to assist families in finding better solutions to domestic unrest in a timely manner.

While no one could claim Malika was unpatriotic, she still wasn't technically an American. As a Soldier's spouse, she was a permanent resident and had a green card.

"I felt very American, but not (actually) being a U.S. citizen was different," Malika said. "I knew that there was something missing."

Malika said the Oath of Allegiance with 39 other immigrants, Jan. 22, becoming a citizen three months after she started the process.

So what's next on Malika's to do list? Becoming a Navy officer. She hopes to continue being a social worker and helping service members and families in need.

The Navy has a great program that allows recent Master of Social Work graduates to work on their licensing hours as a clinical social worker associate without prior military service, according to Malika.

"My heart has always been with the Navy," Malika explained. "My great-grandfather serviced in the German navy during World War I."

If all goes according to plan, Malika will begin the next chapter of her life, as a Navy officer before the year's end.

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Page last updated Fri February 8th, 2013 at 00:00