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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Focus on FLW veterans – WAC graduate**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – Since Vietnam, Lou Cruz has been serving her country, and she's not about to stop.

"I had some hard experiences with the military, but I am proud to have earned the title of Army veteran," she said.

Cruz is currently a Family Advocacy instructor for Army Community Service. A native of Guam, she said she joined the Army in 1973 to make a better life for her mother.

"I supported my mother, who needed medical attention. I did not make enough as an operating room instrument nurse, working for the Government of Guam at the time. They wouldn't allow me to carry my mother on my medical insurance, and I was told to put her on welfare. I refused to put my mother on welfare after all her hard work raising 10 of us by herself," Cruz said.

Cruz is a proud graduate of the Women's Army Corps. Members of the WAC were the first women, other than nurses, to serve in the United States Army.

"My class was the last one to graduate from the Women's Army Corps," Cruz said. "I feel like I'm a part of history." Her favorite Army memories are from basic training.

"I was lost and couldn't understand why they had to yell. The part that got me the most was that we were always running or rushing just to sit and wait," Cruz said. "To this day, I can still see my drill sergeant at the time who was so tiny but loud."

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“I’m laughing now, but back then I kept the ‘yes drill sergeant’ straight face,” she added.

Cruz was an administrative specialist until 1993, when she retired. However, it was during the Vietnam era when she saw the tragedies of war first hand.

“We were part of Operation Baby Lift at the Presidio of San Francisco from 1974 to 1975. We were evacuating the children from Vietnam,” Cruz said.

During the final days of the Vietnam War, the U.S. government brought more than 3,300 children out of Vietnam for adoption by American, Canadian, European and Australian families.

During Desert Storm and Desert Shield in the early 1990s, Cruz was deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of the VII Corps with the 51st Signal Command. Cruz said even though being deployed is hard work, she has some fun memories.

“While we were getting things ready to deploy to Saudi Arabia, a colonel was yelling at me to give him those ‘cable dogs.’ I thought to myself, what is a cable dog? I don’t see anything that looks like a cable or even a dog? After awhile, he yells again ‘Sergeant Cruz, I need those two Soldiers,’ so I learned that signal Soldiers are also known as ‘cable dogs,’” Cruz said.

After retirement, she went to work as a teacher.

“That was not what I really wanted to do. I had to go back and work for the Soldiers. I wanted to help them out and share some of the experiences I had as a Soldier,” Cruz said.

Cruz said she is excited to work for ACS.

“I not only get to train Soldiers and civilians, but also the Marines, Sailors, Airmen and their Families stationed here at Fort Leonard Wood,” Cruz said.

“Who can provide more than someone who has put on that uniform and boots? I feel like I need to give something back to my country. The best way I know is to serve the troops,” she added.

Cruz teaches domestic violence awareness, anger management and parenting from the heart classes, just to name a few.

For Veterans Day, Cruz wants to spend some quality time with her grandkids. She said the best way to celebrate veterans is to thank them for their service.

“When you see one, thank them for serving and mean it from your heart,” Cruz said. “I just like to let all the armed forces know I think of them, especially those in harm’s way. My prayers go out to all of them. Be safe and come home soon.”

Encl. (1) Photo

Photo caption: Lou Cruz, seated, schedules upcoming ACS classes with Debra Ward.

*(Melissa Buckley is a photojournalist with the Guidon newspaper.)*

### *About Fort Leonard Wood*

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*Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains more than 80,000 military and civilians each year.*

*Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.*

*Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.*

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