



Sgt. Andrea Myers interacts with one of the many children who seek help at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Heroes: Employees who answered call

By Lin BALLEW
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Unsung heroes surround us daily. They include patients who bravely stare down catastrophic diseases, the researchers and clinicians who work tirelessly to find cures and better treatments, and the fund-raisers at ALSAC whose efforts make possible the work at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

But there is another group of heroes who quietly go about their daily duties. Almost every department, lab and office at St. Jude and ALSAC has at least one—an employee who served, or is serving, in the U.S. military. The veterans are modest about their brave decision to answer the call of duty. They down-

play their importance and feel uncomfortable with the label of hero.

Gene Mallett is one such example. Mallett has walked the halls of ALSAC for nearly 16 years in roles ranging from computer operator to operations manager in support services. His area is responsible for the help desk at ALSAC and the UNIX support systems. However, he was involved in a different kind of support in 1968 when he was an Army machine gunner with the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam. Transferred to the 9th Division in the Mekong Delta, Mallett and his squad were wading in water when he stepped on a land mine.

"I was lucky. The water muffled some of the blast, and I ended up with a right BK amputation," he says matter-of-factly referring to his below-the-knee surgery. "I've tried hard over the years to not let it affect me. Most people probably don't know that I wear an artificial limb."

Mallett received the Purple Heart, which is awarded for wounds suffered in combat. "If I had it to do over again, I'd watch my step more," he says, "but I'd still be there."

Bobby Roberson, Academic Programs, answered the call to duty upon graduation from Auburn University with a bachelor's degree in biological sciences. He joined the Army through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and became a "Screaming Eagle" with the 101st Airborne Division. He served one tour in Vietnam toward the close of the war. He was attached to the Army's elite Special Forces as a forward observer, among his many assignments. Roberson earned the Bronze Star and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for his actions. "I made some decisions that probably saved some lives," he says with humility

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