

SHARRI BRILEY
Little Rock, Arkansas

Sharri is the widow of CWO3 Donovan Lee Briley who was KIA in Mogadishu, Somalia on 3 October 1993. My husband was part of an elite military unit known as the “Night Stalkers” that used black hawk helicopters to transport special forces operators into difficult battle situations around the world. Donovan was the co-pilot of Super-61 which was the first Black Hawk helicopter shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade. He and pilot CWO3 Cliff Wolcott were killed on impact - the crew members survived the crash. The Academy Award winning film BLACK HAWK DOWN depicts the story of this tragic 18-hour battle where eighteen other elite soldiers were killed in action. The initial mission known as Gothic Serpent started out as a humanitarian effort to stop the threat of famine to the Black Sea Region.

Sharri and Donovan were married 2 months shy of 10 years. Their daughter Jordan was only 5 years old at the time of Donovan’s death. Jordan is now a beautiful wife to Jacob and an awesome mother to Sharri’s handsome grandsons, Isaiah, Elijah, Canaan, and Silas.

Sharri is a proud spokesperson for Gold Star Families of Arkansas. She worked closely with the Marine Corps League and the committee members of the Hershel “Woody” Williams Gold Star Families Memorial Monument project. Arkansas was the first state to commit to building a monument on the state capitol grounds. The Marine Corps League has a special place in their hearts for Gold Star Families and saw the need for Arkansans to honor and pay tribute to the sacrifice that these fallen families endure every day. The Gold Star Families Memorial Monument was dedicated on Gold Star Family Day in September 2019.

Sharri is a past member of a highly revered and long-standing Congressionally Chartered organization where she held several noteworthy positions. Locally, serving as La Petit Roche Chapter President, and on the region level, was the South-Central Region President, which was comprised of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. She also had the honor and privilege of serving on the National Board of Directors.

Sharri is currently a charter and founding member of Gold Star Spouses of America, Inc. and is a proud spokesperson for Gold Star Families of Arkansas. In the many years of representing Gold Star Families, Sharri has experience in overseeing and organizing speaking engagements before the State of Arkansas House of Representatives and United States Arkansas Senators at the state capital regarding Gold Star issues. Sharri is on record for submitting a written testimony pertaining to increased benefits for surviving spouses during the 117th Congress (S. 976). For twenty of the almost thirty-two years of being a war widow, Sharri has been and continues to remain legislatively active in the state of Arkansas as well as advocating on a national level legislative issues pertaining to survivor benefits. Sharri is very grateful for the opportunity to take the courageous stance needed to bring awareness and to be a voice on Capitol Hill for benefits affecting Gold Star Spouses, Families and Children.

Sharri is the Vice-President of Families of the Fallen Night Stalkers (FFNS), a non-profit peer-led organization who supports the family members of Fallen Night Stalkers. Honoring our fallen and caring for their families... NSDQ/LNSDQ

Sharri is the Executive Director for Hearts of our Heroes. A nonprofit organization for Survivors with Survivors who support Arkansas Families of the Fallen. The mission is very simple... keeping the promise to our nation's heroes by NEVER forgetting the Families left behind.

Sharri was chosen as a delegate to represent Arkansas Families of the Fallen and to be an advocate for the many legislative issues that unfortunately have gone unrecognized for far too long. Hearts of Our Heroes was overjoyed to be members of the Arkansas Veterans Coalition (AVC) as well as holding the esteemed status of a valued veteran service organization! The 95th Arkansas General Assembly / 2025 Legislative Session was very successful with the AVC initiated bills. Sharri was instrumental in presenting HB1986 – An Act concerning excused absences for children of fallen service members and children of fallen first responders. HB1986, sponsored by a former Night Stalker, State Representative, Jason Nazarenko, passed, was enacted (ACT 794) and signed by the Governor of the State of Arkansas, Sarah Huckabee Sanders on April 17, 2025.

Sharri is also an honorary member of American Legion – Michael Vann Johnson, Jr. Post 74 as well as a member of American Legion Auxiliary – Michael Vann Johnson, Jr. Post 74 in North Little Rock. On Veterans Day 2004, sixteen veterans of the Korean and Vietnam era and including one World War II (WWII) vet came together and met at the Masonic Temple in North Little Rock, Arkansas to explore the possibility of forming a new American Legion Post serving the greater central Arkansas area. After it was agreed to do so, the Post selected the name Michael Vann Johnson, Jr., to honor his sacrifice. Michael Vann Johnson, Jr., was a Navy Hospital Corpsman (HM2) who died while providing medical assistance to a wounded Marine in Iraq. He was the first Arkansan killed in action during Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 25, 2003.

Sharri is a fiscal support supervisor for Office of Finance/Accounts Receivable at the Arkansas Department of Human Services and hopes to continue her education as a part-time student at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock.

Supporting and serving others, especially families of the fallen, has given Sharri a purpose. Having faith through tragedy has inspired her servant's heart which empowers her to serve one another humbly in love.