
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Wives of CrossFit SolaFide

Nicole Spitzack started CrossFit when her husband was deployed to Afghanistan. When she invited friends to train with her—also military wives—she created an irreplaceable support system.

By **Andréa Maria Cecil**

November 2013



Manivanh Lindeman

Military spouses Silvia Curro (left) and Judy Rutherford after completing Murph.

In 2005, the U.S. Army deployed Cole Spitzack to Afghanistan for 12 months.

"That's a long time," he said. "I missed the whole first year of my daughter's life."

1 of 3



Manivonh Lindeman

Soldier Dave Thompson (left) cheers on his wife, Andrea.

That kind of time is hard on a marriage, too. The Army recognizes that fact, offering soldiers and their loved ones Family Readiness Groups for mental and emotional support. The only problem is those groups aren't for everyone. And they weren't for Spitzack's wife, Nicole.

"I didn't really make any connections. I have found that I personally didn't have a lot in common with the women that were in my particular group at that time," she explained.

Sharing her enthusiasm for exercise and nutrition with the group elicited strange reactions rather than words of encouragement.

That's when Nicole got into CrossFit. Her husband discovered it overseas and suggested she give it a try. Nicole spent roughly a year doing CrossFit out of some friends' garage over the course of several of her husband's deployments. Then she started training in her own garage. She invited friends whose husbands were also deployed.

"We just got to the point where we were hanging out all the time," she said. "As we kept doing that, more girls would tell their friends about what we were doing in the garage, and so everyone just kind of became interested, and one thing led to another and we had 20 women coming."

That is, until the elderly neighbors complained about the multitude of parked cars in the cul-de-sac and the shirtless women working out.

"I was just crushed because so many of us really relied on this. Not having this wasn't going to work," Nicole recounted.

That was four years ago.

Today, Nicole owns CrossFit SolaFide, a Clarksville, Tenn., affiliate with 500 members.

With its proximity to Fort Campbell—the Army base is about 18 miles northwest of the box—the gym has strong

ties to the military. It provides a place to relieve stress as well as to find support and understanding.

“You need a strong group of women to help build you up. And military wives get that.”
—Nicole Spitzack

“The majority of the regular world, they don’t get—when our husbands are gone, (we) don’t get to talk to them. You’re back home taking care of everything yourself. You need a strong group of women to help build you up. And military wives get that,” explained Nicole, who also has a 14-month-old son and is pregnant with the couple’s third child.

“We just have created this environment where the women, especially, can come and kind of love on each other.”

CrossFit SolaFide’s 28 coaches—21 of whom are either active-duty military or a spouse of a military member—continually track whose husbands are deployed as part of an effort to ensure wives don’t feel alone.

“We really make an effort to throw our arms around those ladies,” Cole said.

And the original 20 women from the Spitzacks’ garage still train together during CrossFit SolaFide’s 9- and 10-a.m. classes, he noted.

“It’s just a unique vibe,” Cole said.

These days, the affiliate even attracts women whose husbands have started CrossFit overseas. Training apart, though not ideal, can provide another connection.

“Some CrossFit gyms are really performance oriented. And that’s great. We encourage that,” said Cole, whose deployments have changed to stints of one to three months now that he’s in the Special Forces. “But our primary thing is the community. That goes back to the military side, to the women’s side, and to change our community through CrossFit and allow people to come in and feel a part of something and feel loved and embraced.”

About the Author:

Andréa Maria Cecil is a **CrossFit Journal** staff writer and editor.



Manivahh Lindeman

Military spouse and coach Nicole Geraths (left) during a competition workout. Twenty-one of CrossFit SolaFide’s 28 coaches are military members or military spouses.