What inspired you to join the Navy?
I was born into a military family, although by that time my father had already retired from the US Army as a Purple Heart recipient for injuries sustained in the Vietnam War. While I didn’t move around from duty station to duty station, I was exposed to the military. We lived near the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and visited often. With that exposure, I was all in!

What was your experience as an ROTC midshipman?
In a word: challenging. I transferred to Villanova as a sophomore but was not offered a Naval ROTC scholarship initially. I had to make up for missed coursework, so I carried 18 to 21 credits every semester. The program was physically rigorous as well. I was a high school sprinter who had to work hard at becoming a strong endurance runner in NROTC. It wasn’t easy, and I wanted to give up a few times, but with encouragement from the unit leadership and my fellow midshipmen, I made it through—and was offered a scholarship my junior year.

What stands out as a military career highlight?
Hands down—my first duty station with US Naval Support, Antarctica. I was deployed three times to McMurdo Station in Antarctica, where I served as public affairs officer. At 22 years old, I led 15 people and managed more than $1 million of communications equipment, a radio and television station, and a weekly base newspaper. I also hosted many distinguished visitors interested in the Navy’s logistical support of the National Science Foundation’s research and exploration, including work on the Mars Rover prototype, studies about penguins, ozone and atmosphere, and dinosaur fossil discoveries.

How does your Villanova education influence your endeavors?
I grew up as an Episcopalian, and I wasn’t sure how I would fit into an Augustinian tradition, but I quickly learned that Villanova is about community and service. I love being able to serve others, and Villanova strengthened that desire. In the Navy, I ran a tutoring program for youth, led an Adopt-a-Highway effort and was involved in other projects. In Djibouti, I was able to get “outside the wire” to participate in a discussion group for young people who wanted to improve their English skills. Those opportunities to serve and the exposure to new people and cultures were priceless.

Any advice for those interested in the armed forces?
I would tell them to do it! The Navy—as with all branches of the military—has an important mission to protect the world while working to develop and support service members and their families. We will always be proud of and grateful for the opportunity to serve my Navy and my country.

Retired US Navy Capt. Star Hardison ‘90 CLAS is a proud Villanova Naval ROTC alumna and 26-year Navy veteran whose passion for service began at Villanova and has taken her around the world.