



## Marisa Flores Class of 1995

**Please tell us a little bit about yourself and include the year you graduated.**

**Where do you live now? What do you love about it?**

My name is Marisa Flores, and I graduated from Konawaena High School in 1995. Raised in Honaunau, I now live above the same elementary and middle school I attended as a child. After over twenty-one years of service in the Air Force, returning to where my journey began feels like a gift. Watching my children attend the same schools I did fills me with immense joy, as I watch them grow within the same community as I did. The familiar landscapes, my family's presence, and the land that shaped my early years anchor me with gratitude and a deep sense of connection. I give thanks to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, for guiding me through every step of my life's journey this far.

**Describe your career path since graduating from Konawaena High.**

I departed for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, nine months after I graduated from Konawaena High School. After completing basic training, I was assigned to a naval base in Millington, Tennessee, where I underwent aircraft maintenance training before starting my first job at Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, New Mexico. While at Cannon Air Force Base, I maintained EF-111 and F-111 aircraft until they were retired. I began working on F-16 fighter jets before relocating to Okinawa, Japan, where I served for six years, maintaining F-15 fighter aircraft, C-130 cargo aircraft, KC-135 air refueling aircraft, and HH-60 helicopters. While in Japan, I had the opportunity to travel to many areas of Asia; some of the places I was fortunate enough to visit included Korea, China, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

I achieved a significant career milestone when I was selected to join the Air Force Thunderbird Air Demonstration Team and spent three years working as part of their maintenance crew. During my time on the team, I traveled extensively throughout the mainland and Asia, serving as a member of the air demonstration ground crew. Throughout my career in the Air Force, I also had multiple deployments to the Middle East, where I learned to survive in environments I never thought I would encounter.

For my final seven years before retirement, I was fortunate to be stationed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on Oahu, where I worked on the C-17 cargo aircraft, the KC-135 refueling aircraft, and the F-22 fighter aircraft, which you can sometimes see performing touch-and-goes at our Kona airport. In September 2017, I retired from military service and relocated back home to Kona, where I chose to embark on a new career path in healthcare. I pursued further education at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, where I was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree through the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, with the goal of becoming a Nurse Practitioner to serve our Kona community.

**What was your most memorable experience at KHS?**

Most of my favorite memories stem from my time participating in Konawaena's JROTC program, which provided me with many friends and experiences that helped prepare me for my military career.

The most memorable experience at KHS was graduation day. Sitting in the bleachers on the football field, I recall feeling a mix of excitement and disbelief. High school was academically challenging, and I often doubted I'd make it to that moment.

**What advice would you give to Konawaena High School students?**

Keep working hard and never give up. Life will throw obstacles in your path, sometimes you'll have to climb over them, sometimes run through them, and other times you may need to find a new way around. But no matter what, don't stop moving forward! Every experience, even the challenging ones, can serve as a stepping stone toward your goals. Believe in yourself, stay focused, and know that nothing is impossible when you put your mind to it.

**Have you been back to campus since graduation? If yes, for what occasion?**

Since my son began attending Konawaena, I have returned to campus multiple times. The school has maintained its core identity while undergoing numerous improvements. I've watched many football and basketball games on campus and love the pride and support that Konawaena School provides to our future generations.