



Staff Bio
CJ Bannister | Philanthropic Advisor

As a member of our philanthropic services team, C.J. works closely with our donors and professional advisors to transform our region through bold and proactive philanthropy. Prior to her work at Gulf Coast, she served as the Chief Development Officer at Sarasota Military Academy, helping to launch their foundation. Prior to that, as Director of Veterans Services for Goodwill Manasota, she led Goodwill's efforts to raise funds through philanthropy, planned giving, and local, state and federal grants in order to provide services to returning veterans, who face heightened risks of unemployment, personal problems, and homelessness.

C.J. herself is a veteran. After graduating from high school, she joined the United States Air Force, where she worked as a Crew Chief for four years and subsequently cross-trained to be a Paralegal and worked with the JAG for the remainder of her service. Bannister earned the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSgt) as well as many awards and medals, including: Basic Military Training Honor Graduate, The John Levitow Award at Airman Leadership School, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Military Education Award, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. Bannister served from 1993 until 2001, when she ended her military career as a non-commissioned officer.

After leaving the Air Force, she attended International College (now known as Hodges University in Naples, FL) toward a BS in Management and also worked full time as a Paralegal. C.J. began her career as a financial advisor in 2007, helping individuals with investment and financial needs. Bannister is dedicated to helping others and passionate about giving back and making a difference. She sits on the board of the Sarasota County Veterans Commission, is a graduate of the Gulf Coast Leadership Institute, and has almost 19 years of experience in this community giving back, growing business and programs, as well as establishing and maintaining meaningful partnerships.