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ThanksUSA Begins Third Year of College Scholarships for Military Spouses and Dependents

April 1st marks first day for scholarship application acceptance

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2008 – ThanksUSA, a charitable effort to mobilize Americans of all ages to “thank” our active-duty troops by providing college scholarships to their spouses and dependents, today opened its third year accepting applications for scholarships.

Interested applicants can find more information, eligibility requirements and the official application form at www.ThanksUSA.org. Applications will be accepted from April 1 through May 15, 2008.

“America’s troops provide an invaluable service to our country, and the sacrifice of these men and women and their families should not come at the expense of their educational pursuits,” said Carolyn Ferek, officer of ThanksUSA. “We hope, that in a small way, these scholarships reflect the nation’s appreciation for their service to help defend our freedoms.”

ThanksUSA began in 2005 as the idea of two Virginia schoolgirls, Rachel and Kelsi Okun, as a way to mobilize Americans to thank our active-duty troops for defending our freedoms. The girls attracted a small cadre of adults to develop their idea – including their parents, who contributed the goal of raising funds for military-family scholarships for college, technical and vocational school.

Over the past two years, ThanksUSA has awarded nearly \$4 million in need-based, post-secondary scholarships to more than 1,350 spouses and children of military members serving on active-duty status. Scholarships have been awarded in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to families representing all branches of the Armed Forces including the Guard and Reserves.

“With continued financial support from corporations, foundations and individuals such as AT&T, AOL, TriWest, KPMG, The Starr Foundation, Verizon, and others, we plan to award 500 scholarships at \$3,000 each for a total of \$1.5 million this year,” said Michele Stork, executive director of ThanksUSA. “We hope people across America will continue to invest in deserving

young people and in families who have done so much for our country, by donating to the Scholarship Program via our Web site.”

Previously military spouses had few scholarship opportunities. Although military personnel have GI Bill educational benefits, the access of the spouses and children to that same type of support was sporadic and unreliable.

Additional strain has been placed on Reserve and Guard families when they get called to active-duty – typically interrupting their normal salary, which hampers longer-term saving for college. In another situation, the spouse of a wounded soldier might suddenly become the sole breadwinner. By helping him or her finance higher education, ThanksUSA helps the family increase its long-term earning power while reducing the near-term economic strain.

These need-based scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis to the spouses and children of active-duty military personnel who plan to pursue a post-secondary education, including vocational and technical training. Recipients will be selected on the basis of financial need, demonstrated leadership and participation in school and community activities.

Interested parties can apply online and learn more about the effort at www.ThanksUSA.org.

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About ThanksUSA

Founded in the fall of 2005, ThanksUSA, a non-partisan 501(c) (3) organization, is an effort to thank the men and women of our armed forces and their families for their service to the country with the gift of education. The organization provides need-based, posts-secondary education opportunities to the children and spouses of active duty status military personnel through competitive scholarships. For more information visit www.ThanksUSA.org.