



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 1, 2018

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Military Children and Spouses Receive More Than \$1-Million in ThanksUSA Scholarships

New Funding Mechanism Thanks to Estate Commitment by Extraordinary Couple

McLean, VA (November 1, 2018) – ThanksUSA today announced that 301 children and spouses across all the United States Armed Forces have received scholarships valued at \$1.2 million for the 2018/2019 education year. The national non-profit distributed the awards to students across all 50 states and the District of Columbia attending college, university and vocational schools.

“The financial and career challenges faced by our service members’ children and spouses cannot be over-emphasized, as the majority of military families depend on that member’s modest income alone,” said Jon Rosa, President and CEO of ThanksUSA, in making the announcement. “With tuition and fees at a private four-year university averaging more than \$32,000 annually and four years at a public college at more than \$9,000 our military families have limited options. ThanksUSA helps fill the gaps.”

More than 700,000 military spouses and more 105,000 children between the ages of 17 and 22 sacrifice daily in service to the nation without wearing the uniform but by supporting their warriors on the home front and bases across the globe. ThanksUSA provides increasing numbers of them with career enhancement opportunities through its *Pathways for Patriots* program that includes sponsor- and donor-supported internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and career fairs, in addition to the scholarships.

“The mission of ThanksUSA is to provide life-changing opportunities for our military’s children and spouses, increasing their chances at achieving personal and professional goals,” added Rosa. “*Pathways for Patriots* and ThanksUSA scholarships provide help to fulfill their dreams.”

Among this year’s scholarship recipients is 17-year-old Army dependent Sevon Chambers, enrolled at Rose State College in Oklahoma, and pursuing a career in physiotherapy. Chambers is the recipient of the first Helping Hand Scholarship, funded by Arizona couple Carl and Patricia Pignoli. Valued at up to \$38,000, the **Helping Hand Scholarship Fund** was launched as part of a future living trust donation, a legacy of commitment in the Pignolis’ estate. It is the first of its kind for ThanksUSA and is open to donations by other contributors.

“Receiving this scholarship has lifted a tremendous burden from me and my family,” said Sevon whose father was medically discharged after serving in Iraq. “The Pignolis have made me a member of their own family with not only their financial support, but their inspiring devotion to helping military families.”

Spouses receiving ThanksUSA scholarships this season include Lisa Graves-Gaal, a Marine Corps wife. Lisa is caregiver to her husband Sergeant Toran Gaal, USMC (Ret), a Purple Heart recipient who suffers from traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Lisa is studying psychology and brain science at Palomar College in San Marcos, CA, aiming to practice clinical psychology.

“The past several years have been difficult, at best. My strongest desire is to be a part of the solution,” said Lisa, “I am proud to represent ThanksUSA scholars as a military spouse completing my undergrad in Psychology. Because of you, I will be able to continue pursuing my goal of becoming a Ph.D. serving our veteran population and civilian community members who deal with mental health challenges.”

Since its inception in 2006, ThanksUSA has awarded 4,500 scholarships valued at more than \$14 million. This season’s awards include eight full-tuition (3-4 year) scholarships from Purdue Global University, an accredited online college, valued at \$319,000.

“Our partnership with ThanksUSA helps our warriors focus on their mission, knowing that their families are able to pursue their education and career dreams,” said Meg O’Grady, Purdue University Global’s Director Military and Public Sector Solutions. “By studying online for the most part, students from military families are able to balance service, duty and family.”

Additional support for ThanksUSA’s *Pathways* program and the education fund comes from donors including Altria, Apex, the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Centene Corporation, CVS Health, The Kovner Foundation, KPMG, Legal General America, Lockheed Martin, Mizuho, Monster Energy, Pershing Square Foundation, Red Cloud Food Services, Robert & Nina Rosenthal Foundation Inc., Rumsfeld Foundation, Smiths Detection, Strada Education Network, and others.

For more information on the ThanksUSA Scholarship Fund and the *Pathways for Patriots* program, go to: www.ThanksUSA.org.

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About ThanksUSA

ThanksUSA is a non-partisan, charitable effort to thank the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. The organization provides need-based educational scholarships and pathways to meaningful employment for children and spouses of military personnel.