ThanksUSA Celebrates Ten Year Anniversary!

For nearly a decade, ThanksUSA has been dedicated to the educational empowerment of military families. Our mission is to provide need-based college, technical and vocational school scholarships to the children and spouses of active-duty U.S. military personnel. Since 2006, we have awarded nearly 3,400 scholarships with a total value of more than $10 million. We are proud to say we are “10 Million Strong!”

Guide to Intelligent Giving

ThanksUSA has been given four stars by Charity Navigator, a non-profit that works to guide intelligent giving by assessing non-profits on their financial health, accountability and transparency. Four stars is the highest rating that can be given to an organization.

In addition, CNBC ranked ThanksUSA as one of the top ten charities supporting veteran groups and their families. We appreciate their endorsement and are working to remain one of the top-ranked charities nationwide.

America’s 1st Female 4-Star General Applauds USPTA’s Support of Military Families through the ThanksUSA Scholarship Fund

Tampa, FL

When Ann Dunwoody retired in 2012 as the Armed Forces’ first female four-star general, she could look back at a 38-year Army career and a profound legacy. Chief of Staff of the Army General Ray Odierno said then, “Ann is a leader who lived our Army values, who always led from the front... Her true legacy and reward will be the thousands of soldiers and civilians whose lives she has touched.”

Today, Dunwoody continues to touch thousands, including the children and spouses of America’s soldiers, by signing on to the United States Professional Tennis Association’s (USPTA) Tennis Thanks the Troops campaign in support of ThanksUSA. Dunwoodo is also busy with speeches, the spring release of a book, and plans to play tennis at her USPTA club near her home in Tampa.

You must be quite the tennis player, having played the sport in college.

We had tennis teams that competed against other colleges, but back then there were no scholarships or varsity letters for women who excelled in sports. That said, I with my incredible (SUNY) coach Silvia Stokes, never even thought about Title X for women. We felt like an all-star team and had a very winning record to support it. I was so happy to be part of a team with such fantastic friends and a coach who cared, that I wouldn’t
trade the experience for anything. I learned a lot from winning as well as losing, and I learned a lot of life-long lessons that stayed with me through-out my military career and made me a better leader and person.

Has tennis been a passion for your family?

I learned to play tennis from my mom and dad and brothers and sisters back in junior high school. An afternoon on the tennis courts was a family outing for us. Even after I was in the Army, every visit home involved a tennis match or two with Mom and Dad. When I met my husband Craig, our first date was a tennis match, with the loser having to make dinner. I lost the match but Craig still made dinner [smiles]. We continued to play tennis, often motivated by my mom who played into her eighties. I know if there is tennis in heaven she is on the court right now.

What do tennis and your military career have in common?

Fitness and coaching. The military is a very demanding profession both physically and mentally, and so is tennis. You have to be in great shape and on your toes at all times in both professions. Like Ms. Silvia Stokes, I learned that as good players become more senior, they become good coaches who teach and share their experiences with the next generation. The Army is no different. It is the senior leadership of the Army’s responsibility to coach the next generation waiting on the bench.

You know military families well. How important to them are post-secondary school scholarships, like those from ThanksUSA?

I think that great performance and hard work should be rewarded, and that’s exactly what these scholarships do. Reinforcement of good performance inspires even better performance. Education and sports are both critical components in good leadership. They go hand in hand: Being mentally and physically fit, as well as having the education and the intellectual tools to prepare students for success in the real world.

Why do you support ThanksUSA’s Tennis Thanks the Troops and the USPTA?

I loved being a soldier, and I loved the Army; thus, I am so appreciative of campaigns like Tennis Thanks the Troops that reach out to our men and women who have served. I encourage every organization, business industry, and college where I speak, to reach out to welcome our troops home and make sure that their quality of life is equal to their quality of service.
Treasure Hunt #10 Update

Underwritten by the ESA Foundation, ThanksUSA’s Tenth American History Treasure Hunt (TH10) opened on Thanksgiving Day, 2014, and will run through August 15, 2015. TH10 challenges your knowledge of World War I, which began in Europe 101 years ago. It will be released in four installments through our website and an Apple app. Among this year’s first winners was current Blavatnik Family Foundation/ThanksUSA scholarship recipient Petra Hokanson, an Army spouse stationed in Germany who majors in American and Latin American History at Troy University.

Let’s Hear Your Con Rap!

Students and teachers, get involved in our Con Rap challenge by creating music videos about the Bill of Rights and the freedom it provides to all Americans. Rachel and Kelsi Okun, co-founders of ThanksUSA, perform the original rap in the Nation’s capital to educate and celebrate the United States military. Get involved and share your Con Rap on Facebook or Twitter. Download the original Con Rap on iTunes—all proceeds benefit the ThankUSA Scholarship Fund.

CHARLES ORGBON
Current Scholar

Marine Corps dependent Charles Orgbon tries to live by the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi daily and reminds himself, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

In 2008, Charles founded the non-profit, Greening Forward. “To date, we have distributed over $50,000 in funding to youth environmental projects that have also planted over 300 trees, built over 80 compost bins, installed over 200 rain barrels, recycled 120 tons of waste, and brought together 140 young leaders for two International Young Environmentalists Youth Summits.”

Charles was awarded a $3,000 Bruce and Susie Kovner/ThanksUSA scholarship to begin studying Environmental Economics and Management at the University of Georgia. Charles believes that corporate involvement is key in creating social and environmental change. He plans to use his education to champion policies and practices that protect people and our planet while maximizing corporate profit.

“College—especially at the University of Georgia—has challenged me to think about the world in a different way. Thank you again for affording me this opportunity.”

Announcing New Partnerships

AthleticDNA is a sports apparel company that encourages and motivates the development of characteristics to help athletes maximize their potential. Watch for the opportunity to purchase AthleticDNA apparel during military holidays to benefit ThanksUSA. Apparel can be purchased at www.athleticdna.com or select retailers.

Cody Jessop, fifteen-year-old race-car driver, is a proud partner of ThanksUSA. Look for the ThanksUSA logo as Cody races a USAC HPD Midget. To learn more about Cody, visit www.codyjessopracing.com.

Gells partners its love of sharp-looking apparel with a continued commitment to philanthropy. Purchase a hunter green belt and 5% will benefit ThanksUSA. Belts can be purchased at www.gells.org.

The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation promotes ways to help people achieve a healthy weight through energy balance—calories in and calories out. It focuses its efforts on two critical areas—families and schools—through its Together Counts™ campaign, www.togethercounts.com, which is used by over 21.3 million students across the country.
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