Looking Ahead
ThanksUSA continues to assess and adapt to the needs of military families as they relate to education and employment. After seeing an increase in scholarship applications in 2018, we are set to accept a new wave of applicants from April 1–May 15, 2019. Due to the high demand for scholarship funds from qualified military spouses and children, we will seek to widen the scope of our impact while raising awareness of the challenges that military families are facing.

By sharing scholars’ stories of success and gratitude, we can all be inspired by their shared commitment to education, family and service to others. There are many ways to become involved in ThanksUSA’s mission: Spread awareness on social media, join an upcoming ThanksUSA event, or donate at ThanksUSA.org.

Q&A: Scholar Devotes Career to Military Family Success and Resilience
Geri Lynn Maples is a military spouse and caregiver to her husband Robert. An expert in Military Culture, Geri has dedicated her career to assisting others in understanding the uniqueness of military life both during and after service. Nearly a decade ago while pursuing an undergraduate degree, Geri was awarded $6,000 in ThanksUSA scholarships, helping pave the way for her future. She went on to earn a Master’s in Human Service Counseling: Military Resilience. Today she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Studies, focusing on the needs of military spouses, caregivers and dependent children. Currently a Career Consultant, Geri helps transitioning Veterans and their families. She also launched Operation Mission Insight, which develops support programs for organizations to meet the needs of military clientele.

Q: What are some of the lesser known challenges you never expected to face as a National Guard military spouse?
I have come to understand that I was a military spouse in two different eras, pre and post-9/11. My experiences over those initial years posed challenges that at the time seemed significant. I remember the first two-week annual training when I had to say goodbye. That period he was gone seemed like an eternity. Finally, the day arrived for me to pick him up. On the way to the armory, the clutch on the truck went out on me – with no cell phones at that time. I was alone on a country road and had to manage to coast the truck to a location for help. When I finally arrived to pick him up, Robert was alone at the armory seated upon his bags. As I look back, I am able to giggle about the expression on his face. The lesser challenges seem to be the moments we can chuckle at now!

Q: Tell us about your current studies and future goals.
I am preparing to defend my Doctoral Dissertation in Educational Studies with Union Institute & University. My dissertation is an autoethnography sharing my narrative as a military spouse: my experiences, struggles, and transition post Operation Iraqi Freedom. That narrative includes adjusting to the daily implications of my husband’s invisible wounds of war: post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and ongoing chronic pain and serious illnesses.

2019 EVENTS

MAY 6, 2019
ThanksUSA Golf Tournament
Aldie, VA

JUNE 8, 2019
Helping Hand Golf Tournament
Scottsdale, AZ

JULY 22, 2019
Heartland 4 Heroes Golf Tournament
Brentwood, TN

SEPTEMBER 2019
Gells Charity Golf Tournament
Fairfield, CT

OCTOBER 26, 2019
ThanksUSA Gala
National Harbor, MD

NOVEMBER 8, 2019
ThanksUSA Charity Tennis Pro-Am
Potomac Falls, VA

www.ThanksUSA.org/events

DONATE STOCK
Do you have appreciated stock you want to donate?
Please email Jon@ThanksUSA.org or visit
www.ThanksUSA.org/donation-options.
KENDALL LANGUM

Learning to live with Type I Diabetes provided inspiration to Kendall Langum, the daughter of a Coast Guardsman. Kendall was awarded a $3,000 Centene Corporation/ThanksUSA scholarship for her final year of Nutritional Science studies at Texas A&M University.

“My career aspiration is to become a registered dietitian and diabetic pump educator, assisting young diabetics with the skills and empathy necessary to manage this disease and live long, healthy lives.”

Kendall serves on the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Council and teaches elementary school children about nutrition through the Nutrition and Dietetic Association.

Upon graduation, Kendall intends to complete a graduate program and a Registered Dietician Certification. She said, “I am proud to represent ThanksUSA as a scholar and military dependent. My family and I are grateful for this financial assistance and I am excited to venture into a career as a dietician. Thank you for your support of military families!”

Q: How did these experiences shape your education and career pursuits?

These unique experiences, challenges and lessons learned over the years led to my own self-discovery. I discovered that I am able to pay it forward and become a mentor for new spouses. As I embarked on my academic journey, I connected my early assignments to those real-life experiences that I endured since the young age of 20. My experiences as a military spouse turned spouse-caregiver defined my professional career, and I began to understand that my destiny was to prevent future challenges for those who will come after me.

Q: Tell us about the inspiration behind Operation Mission Insight.

My first assignment as a doctoral student called upon me to write a scholarly personal narrative. That assignment led me to understand that my calling was to prevent transition misfortunes. As I sat down to write my story, I recalled many painful moments and shed a great deal of tears.

It was at that moment I understood I was gaining the knowledge and voice to make a difference.

Q: What does the ThanksUSA scholarship mean to you looking back now, and how did it help you on your journey?

Looking back, I am thankful. I am grateful. Because of the two awards I received, I was able to complete my undergraduate degree in less than the traditional four years. Together, these two scholarships helped lay the foundation to my ability to make a difference in the lives of others.

Q: What have you learned working with un/underemployed military spouses?

I have discovered there is a dire need in two areas: education and military culture awareness on behalf of civilian employers. In regard to education, there is a need for more resources at federal, state and local levels to help alleviate the reliance on student loans. In addition, there is a need for more awareness and resources on college campuses. On the employment side, there is a need for understanding the uniqueness of military spouses and caregivers. Employers should view their unique circumstances as assets and not barriers as a result of their responsibility to their wounded warrior.
Game On

Play It Forward

ThanksUSA launched two campaigns to begin in May for Military Appreciation Month with simple ways to incorporate sports with giving back to military families. Through the Play It Forward Charity Challenge, sports facilities will encourage members to combine PLAYING their favorite sport with PAYING it forward by making a personal donation of thanks to our military. Players can donate by texting GAMEON to 41444.

ThanksUSA’s Tennis Thanks the Troops campaign will promote TLC for the Troops, a “Tennis Lesson Challenge” in which tennis or other racquet and paddle pros can donate their lesson fee to support military family scholarships.

Learn more: ThanksUSA.org/GameOn | ThanksUSA.org/TLC

Pickleball Partnership

For those who haven’t yet noticed, pickleball is considered one of the fastest growing and most inclusive sports in America. ThanksUSA has joined forces with the Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR), which educates and certifies teaching professionals within the sport. PPR is proud to be the Pickleball Partner of ThanksUSA and support the Play It Forward Charity Challenge. We look forward to spreading the mission of ThanksUSA while staying active in the meantime. Game on!

National Spokesperson Stephen Curry

ThanksUSA National Spokesperson Stephen Curry played in his sixth straight NBA All-Star Game in February. This year was special however, as All-Star Weekend was held in his hometown of Charlotte, where his father Dell played 10 seasons for the Hornets. Earlier this year, Stephen also moved into third place on the all-time 3-pointer list.

JOHN WALDEN

John Walden, from an Army family, is pursuing Accounting and Finance majors at the University of Kentucky with the assistance of a $3,000 KPMG/ThanksUSA scholarship. A student of the Lewis Honors College in the Social Enterprise Scholars Program, John resides in a living-learning community dorm that focuses on entrepreneurial skills and community involvement.

John’s goals are to “graduate with honors in four years with the 150 hours required to sit for the CPA exam, complete at least two internship programs, and eventually earn an MBA.” After becoming an expert in his field, he would like to establish his own accounting firm.

In 2003, John’s father was wounded in the line of duty. He said, “While my dad eventually made a full recovery, learning of how fragile this life can be taught me to never pass up an opportunity. I have strived to excel in academics, athletics and community service. Though a very trying time for my family, my father’s unfortunate circumstance helped me achieve many goals.”
ThanksUSA Scholarship Program
Applications Open: April 1, 2019
Applications Close: May 15, 2019
www.ThanksUSA.org

Since 2006, ThanksUSA has awarded $14 million in scholarships.