THANKS USA

APPRECIATION through EDUCATION
Our Dear Friends,

American military families make great sacrifices in the shadow of a service member’s military career. Frequent relocations, family separations, physical and emotional injuries, and financial setbacks are just part of the price service members pay for our freedoms. While they do not wear the uniform, military spouses and children are the backbone of military strength, often putting their goals and dreams on hold to support their service member and serve our country.

As an expression of our gratitude to those who serve, ThanksUSA set out on a path in 2006 to provide educational support and assistance to their children and spouses. We understand that the greatest way to ‘thank’ a service member is to provide for their families. The family as a whole embodies the ideals upon which America was founded.

Since 2006, ThanksUSA has provided more than 4,700 scholarships to deserving family members—spouses and children of service members past and present. Unlike their civilian counterparts, most military families rely on one income, limiting their ability to achieve academic and professional goals. This is especially true for the more than one million military spouses and more than 115,000 college-age children in households across the world. At ThanksUSA, we believe working to alleviate these challenges is an ethical responsibility and a matter of preserving national security.

We could recite countless success stories, but the fact is, providing a post-secondary educational opportunity is key to economic stability. Education is a powerful weapon for success and the great equalizer for families for generations to come.

The need could not be greater, and in a very impactful way, we are directly addressing the educational inequality that exists in our country. Please join us as we advance this critical program and help us not just sustain it—but grow it in the years ahead. ThanksUSA scholarships show our respect for military service and provide a future for sons, daughters, and spouses who stand side-by-side with their loved ones—in service, too.

JON ROSA
PRESIDENT & CEO

B. ROBERT OKUN
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
A Proud History

In 2006, two young sisters found a way to repay the sacrifices military families make on our behalf. Rachel and Kelsi were just eight and ten years old when their neighbor returned from Iraq with severe injuries. Witnessing firsthand the physical, emotional, and financial hardships associated with his recovery, they were moved with compassion. In Kelsi’s words, “Members of the military serve because they want to protect their families. The least that we can do on the homefront is support those sons and daughters and spouses of our armed forces.”

ThanksUSA continues their mission of compassion and gratitude by providing need-based educational scholarships and pathways to meaningful employment for children and spouses of the military, with special emphasis given to those who have lost a loved one in service. With nearly $1 million in scholarships awarded each year to help families attain their academic goals, the work of ThanksUSA is driven by the simple fact that America’s troops and their families deserve our respect and our thanks for their selfless service. Since 2006, ThanksUSA has awarded more than 4,700 scholarships in all 50 states and abroad totaling more than $15.4 million.
Across the lifespan of military service, adjustments and adaptations for troops and their families can be challenging—with communities constantly struggling to meet their unique needs. A recent RAND research report concluded that some of the most pressing concerns and needs for service members and their families include access to better healthcare, employment, community support— and access to education for themselves and their families. For many military families, this dream has become more daunting with the ever-increasing cost of education and high rate of military spouse unemployment.

Education benefits were the top reason for joining the military among active-duty and veteran millennials. Unfortunately, the post-9/11 G.I. Bill simply isn’t enough for hundreds of thousands of military families with children and only one income. Data from the College Board shows that college tuition costs and fees continue to rise each year with the average four-year private institution costing more than $36,000, and four-year public colleges averaging more than $10,000. ThanksUSA scholarships supplement educational costs and give military families greater opportunities leading to academic and professional success.

**Areas of Focus & Priorities for Support**

Across the lifespan of military service, adjustments and adaptations for troops and their families can be challenging—with communities constantly struggling to meet their unique needs. A recent RAND research report concluded that some of the most pressing concerns and needs for service members and their families include access to better healthcare, employment, community support— and access to education for themselves and their families. ThanksUSA remains one of the only needs-based scholarship programs that supports all types of undergraduate education for military dependents from all branches of service including the National Guard and Reserve Forces.

ThanksUSA’s critical work is carried out and advanced through three key programs: ThanksUSA Scholarship Program, Pathways for Patriots, and Tennis Corps.

**Needs and Demands Ahead**

Our American military families make great sacrifices in the shadow of a military career. Too often many are forced to delay or forgo education due to moves, deployments, financial constraints or caregiver commitments. With modest pay, they share the same dreams that we all have— to provide their families with a better life through educational and career opportunities. For many military families, this dream has become more daunting with the ever-increasing cost of education and high rate of military spouse unemployment.

ThanksUSA “thanks” the men and women of the United States Armed Forces by awarding need-based college, technical and vocational school scholarships for their children and spouses. Each year up to 500 scholarships are awarded, with most recipients receiving awards of $3,000 to use for qualified educational expenses.

ThanksUSA has one of the most broad and ambitious scholarship programs available to military spouses and children who fall through the cracks of other government programs as evidenced by the high number of need-based applications received annually. ThanksUSA scholarship recipients represent all military branches including the National Guard and Reserve components, and have come from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and OCONUS base locations. ThanksUSA will always give preference to spouses and children of the wounded and fallen, and closely considers other unique challenges as expressed through an applicant’s personal essay.

**I. THANKSUSA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

ThanksUSA “thanks” the men and women of the United States Armed Forces by awarding need-based college, technical and vocational school scholarships for their children and spouses. Each year up to 500 scholarships are awarded, with most recipients receiving awards of $3,000 to use for qualified educational expenses.

ThanksUSA has one of the most broad and ambitious scholarship programs available to military spouses and children who fall through the cracks of other government programs as evidenced by the high number of need-based applications received annually. ThanksUSA scholarship recipients represent all military branches including the National Guard and Reserve components, and have come from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and OCONUS base locations. ThanksUSA will always give preference to spouses and children of the wounded and fallen, and closely considers other unique challenges as expressed through an applicant’s personal essay.

Education benefits were the top reason for joining the military among active-duty and veteran millennials. Unfortunately, the post-9/11 G.I. Bill simply isn’t enough for hundreds of thousands of military families with children and only one income. Data from the College Board shows that college tuition costs and fees continue to rise each year with the average four-year private institution costing more than $36,000, and four-year public colleges averaging more than $10,000. ThanksUSA scholarships supplement educational costs and give military families greater opportunities leading to academic and professional success.

To meet the evolving needs of military families, ThanksUSA launched the Pathways for Patriots program to help bridge the gap between higher education and meaningful employment. ThanksUSA acts as a catalyst for career development opportunities that reveal military family members’ unique skillsets while alleviating their common challenges.

The Pathways for Patriots program engages corporations from specific industries to create pipelines of military spouses and kids interested in pursuing post-secondary degrees, certifications, and ultimately careers in occupations that companies are struggling to fill. The initiative helps scholars develop relationships, skills and experience through networking, internships and more.

**II. PATHWAYS FOR PATRIOTS**

To meet the evolving needs of military families, ThanksUSA launched the Pathways for Patriots program to help bridge the gap between higher education and meaningful employment. ThanksUSA acts as a catalyst for career development opportunities that reveal military family members’ unique skillsets while alleviating their common challenges.

The Pathways for Patriots program engages corporations from specific industries to create pipelines of military spouses and kids interested in pursuing post-secondary degrees, certifications, and ultimately careers in occupations that companies are struggling to fill. The initiative helps scholars develop relationships, skills and experience through networking, internships and more.

**III. TENNIS CORPS**

ThanksUSA has incorporated tennis in fundraising efforts for the scholarship program through Pro-Ams, tournaments, and a longtime partnership with the United States Professional Tennis Association to create Tennis Thanks the Troops. Through the program, ThanksUSA offers adaptive tennis clinics to disabled Veterans, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 2018, ThanksUSA launched Tennis Corps at the Junior Tennis Champions Center in Maryland, combining a Veterans clinic with junior tennis players in a mentoring environment. The organization is now partnering with the United States Tennis Association on this initiative to expand the program to tennis academies nationwide.
“YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS WORTH MORE TO ME THAN THE MONETARY VALUE IT HOLDS. WITH THE HELP OF THIS SCHOLARSHIP, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REDUCE FINANCIAL STRESS AND FOCUS MORE ON ACADEMIC AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT. BEING ABLE TO COMMIT MORE TIME TOWARDS SUCCESS IS PRICELESS.”

- SCHOLAR SANDRA

Scholars at a Glance

As a military child living on base, Joshua spent countless hours observing various aircraft with wonderment. Joshua has received $9,000 in ThanksUSA scholarships to help realize his dream of becoming a pilot. In 2020, Joshua graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with degrees in Government and History and is beginning his career as a Naval Aviator. “I appreciate ThanksUSA’s investment in my education, and one day, I hope to make it easier for the scholars of tomorrow to achieve their own dreams.”

The daughter of a Navy Master Chief, Erin has received ThanksUSA scholarships totaling $9,000 for nursing studies at Brigham Young University. “It is my heartfelt desire to provide care for patients in underserved areas. I have witnessed life-changing results that advanced treatments can bring to patients, yet access to quality medical care is still a concern for so many people throughout the world.” As the second oldest of six children, the scholarship has allowed her to take advantage of all learning opportunities with less financial pressure on the family.

An Army spouse living in Germany, Tunesha benefits from both traditional classroom learning and online work as she pursues a Computer Science major at the University of Maryland: University College. Tunesha plans to concentrate on Artificial Intelligence to develop safer work environments. “The ThanksUSA scholarship is allowing me to achieve my dream of becoming an AI engineer in the field of Computer Science. What an incredible gift to not only me, but also my small military family!”
MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES HAVE BORNE SIGNIFICANT BURDENS TO PROTECT THIS COUNTRY, AND WE CANNOT LET THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS BE FORGOTTEN. THE ACADEMIC AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THANKSUSA ENSURE THAT MILITARY FAMILIES LEAD PROSPEROUS AND FULFILLING LIVES. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT FAMILIES ARE THE BACKBONE OF MILITARY STRENGTH AND A TRUE REPRESENTATION OF SACRIFICE.

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE CAN COLLECTIVELY SHOW OUR APPRECIATION FOR THE FAMILIES OF OUR TROOPS AND CELEBRATE THEIR ALLEGIANCE, SPIRIT OF SERVICE, AND HEROISM AT HOME. WE ARE CALLING ON YOU TO PLEASE HONOR AND THANK OUR MILITARY FAMILIES WITH THE GIFT OF EDUCATION THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT OF THANKSUSA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

JON ROSA | PRESIDENT & CEO, THANKSUSA
T: 202-643-6175
E: JON@THANKSUSA.ORG
Impact of Education and Employment

24% of military spouses are unemployed despite their active pursuit for work and 77% of employed military spouses believe they are under-employed.

Additionally, independent research concluded that the annual societal cost of military spouse unemployment is between $710 million and $1.7 billion.

The impact of post-secondary education on military families is significant. A recent study by College Board found the following benefits:

- In 2018, the median earnings of bachelor’s degree recipients with no advanced degree working full time were $24,900 higher than those of high school graduates.
- In 2018, among adults between the ages of 25 and 64, individuals with bachelor’s degrees were employed at a rate 14% higher than high school graduates.
- In 2018, 52% of high school graduates age 25 and older working full time year round were covered by employer-provided health insurance, compared with 64% of those with a bachelor’s degree and 70% of those with advanced degrees.
- Among adults age 25 and older, 19% of those with a high school diploma volunteered in 2017, compared with 42% of those with a bachelor’s degree and 52% of those with an advanced degree.
- Voting rates are higher among individuals with higher levels of education. In the 2016 presidential election, 73% of 25- to 44-year-old U.S. citizens with at least a bachelor’s degree voted, compared with 41% of high school graduates in the same age group.
- In 2018, only 4% of bachelor’s degree recipients age 25 and older lived in poverty, compared with 13% of high school graduates.
- Among adults age 25 to 34, 69% of individuals with at least a bachelor’s degree and 47% of high school graduates reported exercising vigorously at least once a week in 2018.

Blue Star Families: 2019 Military Family Lifestyle Survey
College Board: Trends in Higher Education Series - Education Pays 2019

Our Leadership

Board of Directors
Hon. B. Robert Okun, Chairman
Carolyn Ferek, Secretary
Patricia St. George, Treasurer
Anthony Applewhaite
Stephen E. Baskin
Ross Brown
Rhett Butler
Zahid Butt MD, FACG
GEN George W. Casey, Jr., USA (Ret)
CAPT John P. “Sean” Coffey, USN (Ret)
Felicia Dellanini-Harrison
Andrew Don
Larry Duncan
GEN Ann E. Dunwoody, USA (Ret)
Alex Ehrlich
Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr.
Elizabeth Frazee
Jessica Marventano
Mrs. Deborah Mullen
Laura A. Odell
Deanna Tanner Okun
Kelsi Okun
Rachel Okun
GEN David Perkins, USA (Ret)
Peter L. Thoren
COL John “Lanier” Ward, USA (Ret)

Emeritus Directors
Maj Gen Jack Catton, USAF (Ret)
Timothy H. Gillis
LT Gen Normand Lezy, USAF (Ret)
Hon. Rod Paige
MG Hawthorne L. Proctor, USA (Ret)

Advisory Council
RADM Richard A. Buchanan, USN (Ret)
Mrs. Sheila Casey
Mrs. Eva-Marie Chandler
Sharon Chase
SGT Ronald Drach, USA (Ret)
CCM Mike Ferraro, USAF (Ret)
CPT Dawn Halfaker, USA (Ret)
Mrs. Dawn Goldfein
Sgt Maj Alford McMichael, USMC (Ret)
LT Gen Kenneth Minihan, USAF (Ret)
LTG John W. Morgan III, USA (Ret)
LT Gen Ted Oelstrom, USAF (Ret)
Meg O’Grady
Caroline Suplizio
“ALONG WITH ALLOWING ME TO PURSUE MY DREAM, HELPING MY FAMILY FINANCIALLY HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST BLESSING. I CARE FOR MY FAMILY SO MUCH, AND I TRY TO HELP THEM OUT FINANCIALLY IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE; THANKSUSA HAS DONE THAT FOR ME.”

– SCHOLAR JACOB