Back-to-School & Loving It!

It’s that time again! School is back in session and ThanksUSA scholars are hard at work. This year, ThanksUSA awarded 315 scholarships with a total value of $1,327,510 to outstanding and deserving military spouses and children. Kaplan University stepped up in a big way for military families by providing nine full-tuition scholarships including four for scholars pursuing their associate’s to bachelor’s degrees. We are incredibly grateful to Kaplan University for their dedication to the mission of ThanksUSA.

The highlight of our summer was the amazing support from donors in response to The Kovner Foundation $400,000 Challenge Grant. We raised $314,445, which was automatically doubled through the grant, bringing our total to $628,890 in support of military families. In fact, the campaign was so successful that The Kovner Foundation issued a second $400,000 challenge that extends through June 30, 2018. We are determined to meet the challenge but will need your help! To make a donation that will go twice as far for military families, please visit our website.

Q&A: Pathways for Patriots – A Sponsor and a Scholar

ThanksUSA spoke with Lockheed Martin VP of Government Relations Larry Duncan, one the first sponsors of the Pathways for Patriots program, along with alumni scholar Charlotte Orren who has directly benefited from the program. After receiving ThanksUSA scholarships totaling $9,000, Charlotte graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and began a career with Lockheed Martin as a Flying Qualities Engineer with the F-35 Flight Test program.

The Pathways program is becoming an essential tool for broadening the reach of our scholarship program and helping more military family members achieve their educational and career aspirations.

Q: Why did you become involved with the Pathways program?

Duncan: Lockheed Martin has been a proud partner of ThanksUSA and its efforts to provide scholarships for military families for many years. With its focus on connecting military spouses and children to STEM fields, the Pathways program is enabling us to expand our reach in STEM education to the military community.

Q: Can you share a few of the benefits that you have experienced in your work with ThanksUSA?

Duncan: ThanksUSA has made a great impact on the lives of thousands of military families by providing educational opportunities that will help them build a strong foundation for their future prosperity. The program has also helped companies like ours who are looking for talented graduates like Charlotte Orren, a ThanksUSA alumna who is now working for us on the F-35 program.

Charlotte Orren and Larry Duncan at the ThanksUSA Capitol Hill Reception in March

Q: What are the most significant challenges faced today by current and potential STEM field participants?

Duncan: Our Nation is facing a shortage of engineers and scientists, which are critical to our economic prosperity.

For many students who may want to pursue studies in STEM fields, it is challenging to access the right programs and the cost of higher education can be prohibitive.

Q: How does the Pathways program address these challenges?

Duncan: The Pathways program helps mitigate the challenges by providing needed financial assistance and providing its scholarship recipients with resources and information about internships and career fields.

Q: Why do you consider it important to foster healthy relationships between sponsors and recipients of ThanksUSA scholarships?

Duncan: At Lockheed Martin, we believe strong engagement is critical to the success of our partnerships. For the scholarship recipients, it is important for them to be able to see the practical applications of their studies and potential career opportunities in industry. The sponsors are in the best position to showcase what they can do with their education.
JASMINE WILKERSON
Current Scholar

For Army spouse Jasmine Wilkerson, the opportunity to attend college is a treasure. She said, “It’s a dream fulfilled for the many ancestors who prayed for this moment.”

Thanks to the generous support of CVS Health, ThanksUSA is helping Jasmine achieve her dream. Jasmine was awarded a $3,000 scholarship to major in Healthcare Administration at Capella University.

Having completed the summer semester, Jasmine is determined to maintain an excellent academic record and looks forward to a career as a healthcare executive in a hospital or major medical practice. “I look forward to utilizing my skills to provide consistent resources for healthcare professionals in the evolving field of medicine.”

Jasmine also feels empowered knowing that she will be contributing to her family’s long-term financial stability. “With the help of ThanksUSA and CVS Health, this was all made possible. Thank you again for such a warm welcome to the ThanksUSA family — I am forever thankful!”

Q: As a participant in ThanksUSA golf tournaments, share an especially meaningful experience that you recall.

Orren: It was my first ThanksUSA golf tournament, the 2013 Intelligent Decisions Lake Nona Invitational. During the ceremony, I was invited to speak about my experience as a military dependent, college student, and how the support of ThanksUSA has impacted my life. After my speech, a veteran named John E. Bircher III immediately came to me, reached out to shake my hand, looked me right in the eye, and said, “I really liked what you had to say.” And what was left in my hand was his coin! I keep his Purple Heart coin displayed on my desk to this day, and it is one of my prized possessions.

Q: What would you like to say to ThanksUSA and to those who may be considering contributing to this organization?

Orren: Hardly any of the accomplishments I have achieved would have been possible without the support of ThanksUSA. If not for them, I would have needed to consider accruing more debt, transferring schools, and/or changing career paths. Not only does ThanksUSA significantly lighten the financial burden of school but also, they’ve shown me the incredible network of support for military families. I will be forever grateful to ThanksUSA.
During high school, Marine Corps dependent Emily Cluen began working at Camp Rockfish in North Carolina. This part-time summer job soon turned into a career goal. She said, “Serving at Camp Rockfish helped me realize that I would like to be a part of the camping ministry for the rest of my life.”

Emily was awarded a $3,000 USPTA/ThanksUSA scholarship to continue a Recreation Management major at Appalachian State University. A student of the Honors College, Emily is involved with a variety of campus organizations and serves as a resident assistant. Ultimately, Emily plans to earn a graduate degree and teach at the college level. “I will seek a full-time position at a university that will allow me to share the benefits of recreation. I am so excited to broaden my knowledge of the world around me and am grateful to give back to the campus community. Without you, my future would not look as bright as it does!”

EMILY CLUEN
Current Scholar

Tennis Thanks the Troops

This summer, CVS Health joined ThanksUSA at two exciting tennis events. On August 5 at the Citi Open in Washington, DC, the Director of Military Programs at CVS Health, David Lee, along with Rear Admiral Sean Buck, presented Army spouse Jasmine Wilkerson with a ThanksUSA scholarship. On August 21 at the Winston-Salem Open, Marine Corps dependent and ThanksUSA scholarship recipient Emily Cluen joined CVS Health representatives Mark Leonard and James Hyatte on court. CVS Health sponsored ten $3,000 ThanksUSA scholarships for military children and spouses pursuing healthcare, IT, and business degrees during the 2017-2018 school year. As one of our nation’s largest employers, CVS Health has also agreed to work with ThanksUSA scholars in all 50 states who are interested in employment opportunities while they are pursuing their educational aspirations. We thank CVS Health for their tremendous support!
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ThanksUSA Scholarship Program
Applications Open: April 1, 2018
Applications Close: May 15, 2018
www.ThanksUSA.org
Since 2006, ThanksUSA has awarded more than $13 million in scholarships.