$15 Million Milestone
This year, ThanksUSA surpassed $15 million in scholarship dollars awarded since 2006! Because of you, military spouses and children around the globe are pursuing dreams that may otherwise have been out of reach.

Military families make sacrifices on a daily basis, often delaying or forgoing education due to moves, financial constraints, or caregiver commitments. Recognizing these sacrifices is part of our mission, and doing so with an investment in their education is a gift that keeps on giving.

In the final weeks of 2019, we ask each and every American to consider a gift of thanks to our military families. A gift of $100 to the ThanksUSA raffle will enter you to win a new Cadillac XT4! Only 3,000 tickets will be sold, and the winner does not need to be present to win. See details below.

To all who have generously contributed to our $15M milestone, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Q&A: A Wounded Warrior and the Upside of Change
Lt. Col. Justin Constantine joined the Marine Corps while in law school and served for six years as a JAG officer. Then as a Reservist, he deployed to Iraq in 2006. During a combat patrol, Justin was shot in the head by a sniper. He credits his wife Dahlia with being the cornerstone of his recovery. Justin is a Presidential Leadership Scholar, was named a Champion of Change for Veterans by President Obama, and was one of the wounded warriors painted by President Bush in “Portraits of Courage.” For his service in Iraq, Justin earned the Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, and Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal.

Q: You’ve shared many of the sacrifices that Dahlia made to support your recovery. Please share some of the sacrifices you’ve both made in support of her education and career.

When I was shot in Iraq, Dahlia and I were just dating, and she had recently started a PhD program at Cambridge University in England. This was a lifelong dream of hers, and she was very excited to be there. However, Dahlia dropped out of her doctoral program to be with me in the hospital. Although she originally anticipated going back to school later in the

semester, she had to permanently leave the program because of the extent of my injuries. We were in Virginia at the time, and Dahlia started teaching third grade.

Years later, in 2015, we moved to New York when she was accepted into the PhD program at Teachers College at Columbia University. Dahlia has completed all classes for her PhD and will begin her doctoral thesis next year.

In October we moved to England, specifically to Cambridge University, and Dahlia started a one-year Master’s program in Children’s Literature. She finally will have the Cambridge experience, and we are doing it together. This certainly isn’t the educational path Dahlia envisioned 13 years ago, — and of course I hadn’t imagined moving to NYC and England — but it has been an incredible journey.

Lt. Col. Justin Constantine with wife Dahlia

CADILLAC RAFFLE

Enter to win a new Cadillac XT4!
Text FREERIDE to 91999
Drawing: December 31, 2019

For more ways to give, including charitable gift planning and donating stock, please contact Jon Rosa at 202-643-6175 or Jon@ThanksUSA.org.

I have learned that incredible opportunities can arise from situations that at first seemed incredibly daunting.
Justin featured in “Portraits of Courage,” a book of oil paintings and stories by President George W. Bush.

Save the Date: Visit ThanksUSA.org/golf to learn more about golf tournaments supporting ThanksUSA in Nashville (7/20/20) and Tampa (9/21/20).

With a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, supporters of ThanksUSA can be confident that their gifts will be used effectively. Nearly 90 percent of your contribution will directly support our scholars’ education.

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ERIN WARD
2019-20 Scholar

The daughter of a Navy Master Chief Musician, Erin Ward 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 having access to quality medical care is still a warranted concern for so many people throughout the world,” she said.

Erin is the second oldest of six children and is responsible for funding the majority of her education.

“This generosity alleviates so much financial pressure and allows me to take advantage of all learning opportunities. I love being part of this military community, and I cannot adequately express my appreciation. Thank you!”

Q: How did you and your wife grow personally from making such sacrifices?

Going through such a traumatic experience actually brought us incredibly close together. I had to rely on Dahlia for virtually everything and had to learn to be okay with that. I have also done everything I can to help Dahlia actualize her dreams. While we have both made significant sacrifices, we view them more as chances to be a true partner in life.

I have learned that you gain so much by helping others, and that incredible opportunities can arise from situations that at first seemed incredibly daunting.

Q: Please share a little bit about your message of leadership, overcoming adversity and the upside of change as it relates to military family members interested in advancing their education or careers.

I heard someone say that you can’t help other people until your own house is in order, and I thought that was accurate and profound. We all want to help others, but we can do so much more when we have set ourselves up for success. To me, in today’s day and age, that means securing a college degree and identifying a career that you truly enjoy. Neither of those might be easy to do, but neither are military deployments, cross-country moves, and many other things our military family members have to overcome.

Personal leadership means determining what you want to do with your life, identifying the steps you have to take to get there, and then putting your plan in action. Of course, that should all be done in consultation with your loved ones. Then you will be in a much stronger position to embrace change, take care of those around you, and to help more people.

Q: Why would you encourage others to support ThanksUSA’s mission?

Our military family members often put country and family first at the expense of their own education and careers.

ThanksUSA helps these family members go to college and move forward in life. Very often it is the troops who get the attention and the family members are shadows in the background, but it shouldn’t be like that. Dahlia was there for me when I needed it the most, as are other military family members. This is America’s chance to make them a priority.
TUNESHA GRIFFITH
2019-20 Scholar
Tunesha Griffith was awarded a $3,000 ThanksUSA scholarship to continue a Computer Science major at the University of Maryland: University College. An Army spouse living in Wiesbaden, Germany, Tunesha benefits from both traditional classroom learning and online coursework. "UMUC is empowering me to get the education I need while stationed outside of the United States," she shared. Tunesha plans to concentrate on Artificial Intelligence to develop safer work environments. "The ThanksUSA scholarship is playing a huge role in support of my education. It 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!"

National Spokesperson Frances Tiafoe
Talent, athleticism, fierce play and commitment have elevated American tennis star Frances Tiafoe to a top 50 ranking in the world. Now, he brings his big heart and those powerful traits to another mission — helping open doors for the children and spouses of our military.

As National Spokesperson, Tiafoe helps raise awareness of ThanksUSA’s scholarship program. He also serves as ambassador of ThanksUSA’s Tennis Corps, a premiere tennis mentoring program for Veterans and junior players.

“I know what it’s like watching your parents sacrifice everything to give you every opportunity in life. I’m blessed,” said Frances. “Our military families sacrifice so much. Their loved ones put their lives on the line. I am thrilled to help tell their stories.”

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Scholarship Program Highlights
4,710 scholarships awarded for a total value of $15,454,047

Our scholarship recipients come from each of the 50 states and DC and represent all military branches.