

TILLMAN SCHOLARS

————— Class of 2016 —————

PAT TILLMAN  FOUNDATION

MEET THE SCHOLARS

Click on a scholar to view their story.

Class of 2016

Arts

- Robert Ham**
University of Southern California, MFA, Film Production
- Mitchell Lafortune**
UCLA, MFA, Film & Television Production

Business & Economics

- Caitlin Conley**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MBA
- Garrett Cross**
UCLA, MBA
- Neil Duncan**
Columbia University, MBA
- Eli Feret**
University of Chicago, MBA
- Anthony Hatala**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MBA
- Liz Louis**
Stanford University, MBA & Johns Hopkins University, M.A.
International Economics & International Relations
- David Parkinson**
University of Oregon, M.S., Sports Product Management
- Dominic Valentini**
Arizona State University, MBA

Education

- Seth Kastle**
Baker University, Ed.D, Leadership in Higher Education
- Michael Pritts**
Colorado College, MAT, Secondary Social Studies
- Kate McKenney**
Johns Hopkins University, Ed.D, Entrepreneurial Leadership
in Education

Engineering

- Anthony Sprangers**
Northwestern University, Ph.D, Biomedical Engineering

International Affairs

- Chris Donohoe**
Johns Hopkins University, M.A., Global Policy
- Andrea Goldstein**
Tufts University, M.A., Law & Diplomacy
- Ashley La Rue**
University of Oklahoma, M.A., International Relations

Law

- Philip Caruso**
Harvard University, JD & MBA
- Ashley Nicolas**
Georgetown University JD

- Amy Riedel**
The Ohio State University, JD
- Jordan Ritenour**
Stanford University, JD
- John Schippert**
University of Pennsylvania, JD & MBA
- Wesley Stiner**
University of Arizona, JD
- John "Jae" Terry**
Catholic University, JD
- Karthik Venkatraj**
University of Colorado, Boulder, JD
- Dan Walters**
The University of Alabama, JD

Medicine & Health Sciences

- Richard Alexander**
University of Utah, MD
- Thomas Anderson**
Thomas Jefferson University, MD
- Casey Clark**
University of Minnesota, MD
- Caroline Cleveland**
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, DPT
- Rob Faulk**
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, DPT
- Andrew Fisher**
Texas A&M University, MD
- Rea O. Fuentes**
MGH Institute of Health Professions, M.S., PA Studies
- Karen Gallagher**
Arizona State University, Ph.D, Speech & Hearing Science
- Anthony Johnson**
Northern Illinois University, Ph.D, Health Sciences
- Nick Marsh**
Indiana University, M.S., Medical Physics
- Jeremy Marx**
Georgetown University, MD
- Sangki Oak**
University of Pittsburgh, MD
- Juan Ramos**
Liberty University, DO
- Zachary Salas**
Dartmouth College, MD
- Jeffrey Sargent**
University of South Florida, B.S., Health Sciences
- Stephen Skiano**
Midwestern University, M.M.S., PA Studies
- Deborah Trimble**
University of Michigan, MD

- Melissa Thomas**
Yale University, MD
- Jay Vinnedge**
University of Oklahoma, MD
- Cody R. Ward**
Augusta University, M.S., PA Studies
- Jonathan Wood**
University of Pennsylvania, MD & MBA

Nursing

- Scarlet Fellingham**
Duke University, BSN, Nursing
- Katelyn Newton**
Arizona State University, DNP, Pediatric Primary Care

Political Science

- Ryan Barrett**
University of Missouri, St. Louis, Ph.D, Political Science
- Nathan Derge**
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, B.A., Political Science

Psychology

- Lucas Hansen**
University of St. Thomas, M.A., Counseling Psychology
- Adam Popp**
George Washington University, M.A., Rehabilitation
Counseling
- Andrea Wolfe-Clark**
University of Utah, Ph.D, Clinical Psychology

Public Policy & Administration

- Brian Bertges**
University of Maryland, Master of Public Management
- Keith Caton**
Harvard University, MPA & Stanford University, MBA
- Kevin Mott**
Harvard University, MPP & MBA
- Matthew Micllette**
University of Pennsylvania, Masters of Public Health & Social
Policy

Sciences

- Khalida Hendricks**
Ohio State University, Ph.D, Theoretical Particle Physics

Veterinary Medicine

- Amie Pflaum**
North Carolina State University, DVM



RICHARD ALEXANDER

U.S. Air Force | University of Utah | Doctor of Medicine



“WHAT BECAME OF THAT EIGHT-YEAR-OLD FATHERLESS GIRL I WILL NEVER KNOW, BUT I HOPE TO SPEND MY LIFE PREVENTING THAT UTTER HOPELESSNESS AND FEAR I SAW IN HER EYES THAT DAY.”

Always possessed by a love for the outdoors, adventure, rescue and emergency medicine, Richard - an EMT and volunteer with his local fire department - was preparing for paramedic school just as the wars began in Afghanistan and Iraq. Driven by an increasing desire to serve in the military, he enlisted in the Air Force to pursue training as an elite Pararescueman. During his deployments overseas, he witnessed the pain that war inflicts on both sides of the battlefield, rendering care to fellow service members, local Afghans and even captured insurgents and their frightened children. In the process, Richard has learned how to provide compassionate care under stressful circumstances with limited hands and medical resources. Today, these collective experiences are driving him to pursue medical school at the University of Utah, so he can more effectively help those in need within his own community and around the world.

After medical school, Richard plans to continue his service in the National Guard while supporting his community as an Emergency Physician, focusing heavily on improving access to quality care because he realizes that visits in the emergency setting may be the only opportunity some patients have to receive compassionate medical care. Outside of his military duties, he also plans to stay heavily involved with regional, national and international aid work and disaster relief through organizations like Team Rubicon and Remote Area Medical (RAM). As a Pararescueman, with five years of active duty service and seven years of Guard service, he believes he is uniquely trained to serve others in their hour of need in the most remote and non-permissive environments.



THOMAS ANDERSON

U.S Navy | Thomas Jefferson University | Doctor of Medicine



“THE FUNDAMENTAL UNIT OF SERVICE IN MEDICINE IS EACH PATIENT-DOCTOR INTERACTION AND I’M GRATEFUL THAT I WILL BE A PART OF THIS EXPERIENCE SOON.”

Inspired by both of his parents' service to join the military, Thomas was motivated to be part of something larger than himself, serve his country, and go on his own adventures, so he put school on pause and enlisted in the Navy, changing his life by giving him a profession to dedicate himself to - medicine. As a Hospital Corpsman Thomas' deployment to Afghanistan sensitized him to seeing suffering in other people with chronic medical conditions for which he was unequipped or untrained to help. Upon his return to the United States Thomas found that he was constantly seeing the same neglect and suffering in his own city, teaching him that life isn't just fragile in foreign countries, but among the people that he calls neighbors. Thomas' time in the Navy allowed him to develop a personal philosophy motivating him to dedicate himself to protecting life and easing pain as much as he possibly can.

With a medical degree from Thomas Jefferson University, Thomas looks to specialize as an infectious disease physician, primarily focusing on underserved populations for which HIV, hepatitis, and other infections are poorly managed due to a lack of healthcare access and other complicating circumstances. With a shortage of infectious disease physicians, at the same time the United States is seeing an epidemic of heroin addiction and blood-borne disease transmission where Thomas would like to focus his career on addressing that unmet need. With the belief that the fundamental unit of service in medicine is each patient-doctor interaction, Thomas plans to provide a direct impact to individuals every day during his patients' most difficult moments.



RYAN BARRETT

U.S. Air Force | University of Missouri, St. Louis | Ph.D., Political Science



“IT IS THE JOB OF LEADERS TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GROUP MEMBERS WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO AFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE. EDUCATION IS THE BEST TOOL FOR TAPPING INTO THIS POTENTIAL.”

After his first deployment to Iraq, Ryan volunteered to deploy to Afghanistan for another year, which he now credits as the most profound learning experience of his life. There, the most important lesson he learned was developing actionable ideas; the Air Force taught him that implementing ideas is as important as the ideas themselves. He also consistently witnessed the power of heterogeneous teams accomplishing challenging tasks through pooling the respective skills of their members.

Now, separated from the military, Ryan is pursuing his Ph.D. in Political Science with a concentration on U.S. foreign security interests vis-à-vis Russia and the post-Soviet states. Currently, he is serving as a Boren Fellow in Belarus, and hopes to combine his military experience and knowledge of Russian culture and language to serve future U.S. security needs. After completing his dissertation research in Kiev, he plans to return to government service as a diplomat or analyst, with the goal to eventually pursue work in the private or nonprofit sector to further American interests in the region. He believes that ‘soft power’ and supporting the development of civil society in the region is critical to further democratization. A firm believer that education is the best tool to tap into potential, he also hopes to continue teaching politics and public policy as an adjunct professor to help impart civic values on the next generation.



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BRIAN BERTGES

U.S. Army | University of Maryland | Master of Public Management



“MY SERVICE STARTED WITH AN OATH, BUT CONTINUES FOR A LIFETIME.”

Learning from his Marine Corps veteran father to always take care of others, Brian made the single best decision of his life and enlisted in the United States Army, providing him with discipline and motivation to not only accomplish his goals but serve his community. During his time in the service, Brian pushed himself while advocating for others through his leadership and mentorship to fellow soldiers. Learning from his father and through the military that alone we can make a difference, but as a community we can move mountains, Brian's service started with an oath but continues for a lifetime.

Holding jobs in public service for over 10 years, including public education and the veterans' space, have inspired Brian to pursue his Master's Degree in Public Management with plans to make change as a nationally elected official. Upon earning his Bachelor's degree from Pennsylvania State University, Brian joined Teach for America and witnessed firsthand the achievement gap between the low-income and high-income students, inspiring his interest in social justice and policy reform. With his degree Brian plans to look for ways to collaborate between private and public entities, and eventually making a difference in an elected position.



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PHILIP CARUSO

U.S. Air Force | Harvard University | Juris Doctor & Master of Business Administration



“MY EFFORTS IN SCHOOL, GOVERNMENT, AND AS A GOOD CITIZEN WILL HELP PROTECT OUR INVESTMENT IN A BETTER WORLD.”

During over eight years of humbling service in the United States Air Force, Phil learned more about the world, life, and leadership than he ever dreamed possible. Through training he underwent, jobs he had, people he led, and difficult situations he faced, one critical lesson endured: every day, everywhere, and in every way, the world needs leaders to guide it toward a better future. Phil also learned that although it seems like only a precious few take the world upon their shoulders and sacrifice for greater good, anyone can step up and make a difference. Phil's mission is to make an impact and inspire others to do the same.

Phil's long-term objective is to become a senior leader in government, where he can leverage his experiences to help our country face complex and rapidly evolving threats. Philip is currently working towards his JD/MBA at Harvard University, gaining problem solving skills that will help him become a better civilian and analysis leader. Phil plans to continue helping other veterans in every way possible for the rest of his life.



KEITH CATON

U.S. Navy | Stanford University | Master of Business Administration
Harvard University | Master of Public Administration



“WHAT I HAVE ACHIEVED IS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO HOW MY MOM TAUGHT ME TO VALUE MYSELF, MY RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVING OTHERS ABOVE ALL ELSE.”

Keith's motivations to serve in the military derive from his upbringing in Oklahoma and, in particular, the guidance and support of his mother. As a single parent, it was her resolve, strength and love that provided him with an environment free from the negative influences in their community. Growing up, he watched as she tirelessly worked to provide her two sons a sense of normalcy at home, including putting Christmas presents on layaway. Looking back, he credits her optimism with gifting him awareness; an understanding that there were so many things in the world he could do, but only if he worked hard.

Through hard work, he eventually graduated valedictorian and received scholarships to regional colleges; but ultimately joined the military not only to give back to his country after 9/11 but to fulfill the promise he had made to his mother that he would realize his full potential. In the Navy, Keith came to better understand the impact of his actions on fellow sailors and on the battlefield. Losing friends made him despise the brutality of combat, while allowing him to appreciate the sanctity of life. Their deaths have allowed him to live life with gratitude, and without a sense of entitlement, nor self-absorption.

Today, he is pursuing a rigorous joint MBA/MPA at Stanford University and Harvard Kennedy School, with aspirations to work in international affairs, policy and economic development. Informed by his upbringing and military experience, he wants to help U.S. and foreign government officials, business leaders, international organizations, and opinion-makers to promote national security through policy and economic development. In the future, he hopes to build out his own firm that leverages the unique skill sets of veterans and continue to support them as they make their transition from active duty service.



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CASEY CLARK

U.S. Army | University of Minnesota | Doctor of Medicine



“THE MILITARY HAS A UNIQUE WAY OF UNITING EVERYONE UNDER A COMMON PURPOSE. EVERY DAY, THESE IDEALS DRIVE ME TO BETTER SERVE MY COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY.”

Eager for adventure, Casey enlisted in the U.S. Navy, quickly learning the importance of teamwork, unity and selfless service. After honorably serving for four years, he decided to separate from the Navy in 2000 to pursue his education at the University of Wisconsin. But in the aftermath of 9/11, he talked with recruiters and former teammates, ultimately deciding to re-enlist and continue his service as an Army medic upon graduation.

Inspired by how Army medics were conducting clinics in remote areas of Iraq and Afghanistan, Casey wanted to help those who had no access to western medicine. During one of his deployments, he witnessed the need for Iraqi military medics and developed a comprehensive medic-training course. Throughout the training, he not only developed close relationships with the Iraqi medics, but was also privileged to learn much about their language and culture. Together, they coordinated with the Iraqi Ministry of Health to set up temporary clinics in remote areas throughout Diyala Province; in addition, they conducted basic first aid classes for the community, orchestrated women’s reading classes throughout the province, and provided school supplies to children in underprivileged areas.

As an Army medic, Casey’s service overseas underscored the importance of serving individuals in the community with compassion and respect. His greatest reward was witnessing the Iraqi medics’ competency and willingness to support their community. Now, after 12 years of military service, he is pursuing his medical degree at the University of Minnesota in order to bring exemplary patient care and compassion to his own community.



CAROLINE CLEVELAND

U.S. Army | University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill | Doctor of Physical Therapy



“IF WE EACH GIVE OURSELVES COMPLETELY TO ONE PERSON, THEN TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE THE MASSES, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.”

Although Caroline joined the Army after 9/11 to safeguard her family from the atrocities of terrorism at home, it wasn't until she lost her teammate - Lt. Ashley White - in Afghanistan that she discovered the deepest meaning of service and self-sacrifice. Her work as part of the Army's first Cultural Support Team with Ashley and Afghan women, amidst terrorist training camps and rape houses, has inspired a new calling to serve people who have been marginalized in the most violent parts of the world. At the University of North Carolina, she is fulfilling this ambition by becoming a physical therapist (PT) to eventually provide rehabilitative care to victims of war and rape, while working to abolish the sex slave trade.

No longer conflicted by Viktor Frankl's statement that "it is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses." Caroline wants to better understand, accurately diagnose, and effectively treat her patient's unique physical, emotional, and sociocultural needs. After graduation, she plans to volunteer through Heal Africa in the Congo where rape - as it is in far too many countries - is used as a weapon for suppression of women and young girls. While she acknowledges that the task of abolishing human trafficking and sex slavery seems insurmountable, she is undeterred from trying in Congo or elsewhere. On the ground level, she hopes to leverage the skills and tactics she learned about counterinsurgency in the military to recruit and lead medical teams that can provide care and safety for the victims of rape and trafficking.



CAITLIN CONLEY

U.S. Army | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | Master of Business Administration



“THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH GAINED IN THIS NEXT ENDEAVOR WILL ENABLE ME TO BETTER DEVELOP AND MENTOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF SOLDIERS AND ORGANIZATIONS I LEAD - LEAVING AN IMPACT THAT FAR OUTLASTS MY PERSONAL SERVICE.”

Growing up outside New York City, the attacks on September 11, 2001, had a tremendous impact on Caitlin and her perspective on service to her country. It was then as a junior in high school and her country going to war that Caitlin knew the right decision was military service. Graduating from the United States Military Academy in 2007, Caitlin commissioned as an officer in the Military Police Corps. At the time, women were prohibited from serving directly in ground combat arms branches such as Infantry or Armor, so the Military Police Corps and its mission represented the closest opportunity to serving on the front line.

Since her time as a cadet, Caitlin has worked continuously to demonstrate that tactical and technical competency is not decided by gender but by the individual, and as a young military officer she continued to push the envelope on women's role in combat assignments. In 2008, she was selected to lead the first Military Police Platoon organic to an Infantry Stryker Brigade Combat Team, and became the Army's first female maneuver officer in an Infantry Stryker Brigade. In 2010, she was selected as the first female officer to serve in an operational capacity within a special missions unit. During her past six years in the Special Operations Community, Caitlin served in numerous operational and leadership roles to include multiple overseas deployments. In 2014, Caitlin was selected to command a newly established unit charged with developing and integrating cutting edge technological capabilities into ground tactical operations. During its inaugural year, Caitlin brought her troop from concept to tactical reality, enabling U.S. forces to maintain greater advantage over the enemy.

Wanting to be the leader that turns ideas into action, Caitlin continues her service making the world a safer place by finding realistic solutions to complex problems within the national security arena while blazing a trail for future female officers in the Special Operations community. Caitlin's experiences have showed her that effective solutions to strategic problems require informed and innovative leaders bold enough to seek out unconventional approaches and build broad ranging teams. As a current and future leader in the Special Operations Community, Caitlin will operationalize the skills learned from MIT's MBA program to better guide niche capability special operations units and pursue innovative solutions to advance U.S. strategic interests.



GARRETT CROSS

U.S. Marine Corps | UCLA | Master of Business Administration



“I AM EAGER TO BEGIN A NEW CAREER WHERE I CAN ONCE AGAIN LEAD, INSPIRE AND MENTOR PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THINGS THEY NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE.”

Eighteen years old and one week into his freshman year of college, Garrett was deeply impacted by the attacks on 9/11. Despite skipping football practice and meeting with a Marine Corps recruiter the very next morning, Garrett made the decision not to enlist at the time and chose to continue with football and his education; however, a seed had been planted that would only grow with time. Upon completing his senior season at the University of California, Berkeley he signed a contract to play tight end for the Green Bay Packers. Although Garrett had made it to the NFL and was living the dream of nearly every American male, he could not shake a sense of duty to join the fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. After wrestling for months with the decision of whether or not to walk away from his NFL contract in order to pursue military service, Garrett turned to Pat Tillman as a source for inspiration and joined the Marine Corps.

Garrett's ultimate goal as a Marine infantry officer was to lead men in combat against this nation's enemies. Having realized that goal, he is ready to pursue the next challenge where he hopes to once again inspire and mentor others to achieve things they never thought possible. Currently working towards a master's degree in business administration from UCLA, Garrett plans to start a company focused on utilizing proprietary technological applications that will give service members realistic and cost effective training in order to further prepare them for real life missions. With plans for several additional ventures in the future, Garrett hopes to employ as many veterans as possible, capitalizing on the vast range of talent and capability throughout the military and veteran community.



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NATHAN DERGE

U.S. Marine Corps | University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee | B.A., Political Science



“SEEING INNOCENT PEOPLE SO EASILY ABUSED BY OTHERS WITH SO MUCH IMPUNITY REVEALED TO ME HOW FRAGILE CIVIL RIGHTS ARE BOTH ABROAD AND AT HOME.”

Motivated by a desire to find meaningful purpose and see the world beyond rural Wisconsin, Nathan enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at age 17. In the military, he was fortunate to serve with men and women from different ethnicities, cultures, economic and varied backgrounds - fighting together to protect civil and human rights where laws did not defend them.

Overseas, he witnessed corrupt officials neglect and mistreat people they were appointed to protect, and came to realize how fragile civil rights are. He watched as people's meager possessions and homes were taken, leaving them without shelter or a means to survive. These acts of horrendous injustice sparked within him greater compassion and awareness of disparities in how the law protects different people in many communities - rural and urban - across the United States.

By pursuing his studies in political science and criminal justice, Nathan is determined to ensure laws protect the rights of all regardless of class, ethnicity, or gender. Currently, he has ambitions to volunteer with a local legal clinic to address policies that have created disparate opportunities for impoverished Milwaukee area citizens. After graduation, he plans to attend law school to continue his service in the Federal District Court system.



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CHRIS DONOHOE

U.S. Army | Johns Hopkins University | Master of Global Policy



“ONE CANNOT KNOW THE TRAVAILS OF HUMAN HISTORY AND REMAIN UNMOVED BY THE GREAT GIFT IT IS TO BE BORN AMERICAN.”

When he enlisted in the Army in 1996, Chris had little doubt that his decision would prove to be the most consequential of his life. Over twenty one years, his military service has changed his life by illustrating, in stark relief, what the true essentials are for human fulfillment and happiness. The perspective he gained, particularly during wartime and long separations from his family, quickly exposed many of the trappings of modern day living for what they are - distractions from things more worthy of human endeavor. These lessons were consistently conveyed to him not only through his own experiences, but also through observation of those with whom he served.

Though exceptionally proud of the service rendered by military members in the years following 9-11, Chris recently retired from the Army with an undeniable sense that these efforts were, at times, reduced in consequence as a result of ineffective policy-making. For this reason, he is now pursuing his Master's in foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University, believing that his education combined with his experiences over the last twenty one years in uniform can be of value to the country in the years ahead. In particular, he wants to focus his efforts on undercutting the underpinnings of the radical Islam that now plagues certain portions of the Islamic world. He hopes this research, coupled with his fluency in Arabic and nearly 15 years of direct involvement in the Islamic world, will prove of considerable value to policymakers in Washington as well as influential power-brokers throughout the Middle East region.



NEIL DUNCAN

U.S. Army | Columbia University | Master of Business Administration



“I HAVE A DUTY NOT TO QUIT, DESPITE INJURIES SUSTAINED, AND SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW.”

Growing up in a family with a long lineage of service in World War II, Korea and Vietnam left a strong impression on Neil as a youth. But the events of 9/11 were the final catalyst that motivated him to join the Army just after his 18th birthday. Immediately after completing training, he deployed first to Iraq in 2003 with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and then to Afghanistan in 2005 where he assumed command of a fire team.

Ten months into the deployment, however, Neil's life changed dramatically when his team's vehicle was hit by a powerful IED. The device detonated directly underneath him, destroying his legs, breaking both his arms and his jaw. Evacuated and induced into a medical coma, Neil woke up weeks later at Walter Reed hospital where his outlook was as uncertain as it had ever been. His jaw was wired shut, his arms were in casts, his legs were amputated, and he was being operated on several times a day. Despite severe injuries, Neil leaned on the one common lesson that was instilled in him during his service: duty. He knew he had an obligation to make himself as strong and knowledgeable as possible; he had a duty not to quit and set an example for those to follow; and he also knew he had a duty to reciprocate to those individuals and organizations that were helping him through his recovery.

Now, medically retired, Neil is pursuing his MBA from Columbia University with a focus in finance and investment. Informed by his military experience, he believes that strong culture, personal accountability, a sense of duty to the organization, and the ability to keep morale high during stressful situations are key for any business or organization to thrive. As a leader, he wants to continue his service both within the business and nonprofit sectors, building relationships and partnerships that will directly impact the lives of wounded service members, veterans and their families. As a way to empower fellow veterans and raise awareness, he serves on the grant committee for the Infinite Hero Foundation, and volunteers his time organizing mountaineering expeditions for veterans to climb some of the the tallest peaks in the world.



ROB FAULK

U.S. Army | University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences | Doctorate in Physical Therapy



“TRUE LEADERSHIP HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH TITLES OR POSITION, BUT INSTEAD CONSTITUTES HOW SOMEONE LIVES, DEALS WITH ADVERSITY, INFLUENCES OTHERS AND STRIVES TO BECOME BETTER.”

Never knowing his own father, Rob's initial motivation for military service was to be a father that his children could look up to. During his youth, his mother was sent to prison when he was five years old, leaving Rob and his sister scattered between foster homes without a consistent positive figure to emulate. By enlisting as an Army medic, he wanted to pursue a career that would make a positive difference in the world and provide his own children with a healthy environment in which to flourish.

Following his tour after 9/11, Rob wanted to have a greater impact in the lives of soldiers and their families while deployed and at home. Passionate about helping injured and wounded soldiers recover, he was drawn to physical therapy and started the Amputee Program at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. There, he learned the most significant lesson of military service, that true leadership has little to do with titles, but instead constitutes how someone lives, deals with adversity, influences others and strives to become better. At Walter Reed, he was ceaselessly inspired by the determined pursuit of excellence in his patients, and he started taking night and weekend community college courses to advance his own training as a rehabilitation expert.

By pursuing his doctorate in physical therapy, Rob is now focused on learning the foundation of care: injury prevention programs. While the military undertakes a certain level of unavoidable injury risk, he believes it's critical that as we find ways to help the Army's elite soldiers become stronger, faster, and more technically and tactically efficient, we must also ensure that we educate them on how to prevent injury, how to self-treat when necessary, how to identify in themselves and their teammates the early stages of decreased performance and mental focus, and how to recover from physical, emotional, and mental stressors. After completing his doctorate, Rob will continue serving within the U.S. Army as a noncommissioned officer. Though qualified to become an officer, he is committed to staying with the Army's elite soldiers, even at the sacrifice of higher rank.



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SCARLET FELLINGHAM

Military Spouse | Duke University | B.S.N., Nursing



“NURSING IS MY PATH BECAUSE, MORE THAN ANYTHING, I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF ALL HUMAN LIFE.”

Inspired by pictures her husband sent her of local children while deployed in the Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, upon completing her junior year of college Scarlet stepped outside of her comfort zone and boarded a plane headed for Mombasa, Kenya. Scarlet volunteered to teach basic reading and writing to third and sixth grade children in the slums of the city as many could not afford to attend the local public schools because they could not afford books or uniforms. Though many students were hungry or constantly sick and unable to stay awake and alert in class, what saddened her the most was that 70 percent of the students were HIV positive. Scarlet left Kenya with a heavy heart and clear mind, realizing nursing was her new path. More than anything, she is passionate about the preservation and protection of human life. Upon graduating with her Bachelors in Economics/Pre-law from Campbell University, Scarlet began pursuing her nursing degree.

Inspired by her husband's leadership and mentorship, Scarlet intends to remain an active military spouse. Being the wife of a company commander, she's worked closely with the families in her husband's unit, and she understands just how important a support base is for families in an ever-changing environment like the military. With an academic goal to receive her Doctorate in Nursing and become an Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner specializing in HIV/AIDS treatment and research, Scarlet hopes to share her passion and enthusiasm with her peers. She believes every great, successful nurse has come to this conclusion, and they have answered the calling. With her husband's aspirations of becoming a part of the military's Volunteer Transfer Incentive Program, Scarlet and her husband hope to move abroad where she can work with an international public health NGO specializing in HIV/AIDS research, so she can continue the work she started in Kenya by helping infected children across the globe.



ELI FERET

U.S. Army | University of Chicago | Master of Business Administration



“THE COMMON SENSE AND ETHICAL APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT AND PROBLEM SOLVING I LEARNED IN THE ARMY WILL BE THE FOUNDATION OF MY FUTURE CAREER.”

Following in his father and grandfather's footsteps, Eli's passion to join the Army grew while studying at West Point during the escalation of Iraq and Afghanistan, training as an infantry officer, and leading soldiers in and out of combat. Learning that his generation's challenges were not confined to the borders of Iraq and Afghanistan, Eli believes that his responsibility goes far beyond wearing the uniform and serving in our nation's wars. He believes that duty is a daily commitment that requires discipline, focus, and endless personal growth.

Eli plans to combine his Army leadership background with the scientific study of business, to gain a breadth of experiences working in operations consulting, and to ultimately become a leader and reformer in national defense logistics. Witnessing many disconnects between leaders fighting to equip their units and a bureaucratic military supply infrastructure, Eli believes that lessons from the modern business world can be applied to government finance and logistics to ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars while equipping warfighters for the complex conflicts of the future.

Eli also experienced - both in his family and those he served with - the consequences when loss of purpose follows the confusion and trauma of combat. Because of this, he is passionate about helping fellow veterans find purpose through continued service outside of the military.



ANDREW FISHER

U.S. Army | Texas A&M University | Doctor of Medicine



“THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON I HAVE LEARNED IS THE ENDURING BOND FORGED IN COMBAT WITH MY FELLOW RANGERS - WE WILL NEVER ALLOW EACH OTHER TO FALL ALONE. IT IS TRULY A TEAM EFFORT AND NO ONE PERSON IS GREATER THAN THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THAT TEAM.”

In 1993, Andrew joined the Army to fulfill a desire to serve, and in return he discovered he had something to offer the world. While serving with the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, he took an Emergency Medical Technician course -- and knew then that medicine would become his lifelong passion.

Informed by his service as a Physician Assistant with the 75th Ranger Regiment, Andrew wants to help improve prehospital combat medicine. As a PA, he has participated in almost 600 combat missions and taken care of over 100 people at the point of injury. One of the most significant experiences of his life was losing his Army medic, during an intense gunfight in Afghanistan. Then and now, his medic's death pushes him to continue his service and research to improve care on the battlefield.

Andrew is currently working on several initiatives, from utilizing group O low titer whole blood at the point of injury to researching and advocating for the use of ketamine at the point of injury to prevent PTSD and chronic pain. After completing his medical degree at Texas A&M, he plans to rejoin the Army and support the Department of Defense as it tries to identify better ways to address preventable death on the battlefield.



REA O. FUENTES

U.S. Army | MGH Institute of Health Professions | Master of Physician Assistant Studies



“AS A PA, I WILL STRIVE EVERY DAY TO TREAT MY PROFESSION NOT AS AN OBLIGATION, BUT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE MY PATIENT’S QUALITY OF LIFE AND MAKE THE MOST OF MINE.”

As a child of two immigrant parents Rea was given a lot of blessings but not the benefit of experience to guide her when planning for her future after high school. As the first person in her family to graduate high school in the United States, Rea enjoyed being an academic and knew she had to take it upon herself to plan her future. Joining the Army allowed Rea to give back to the country that had given her family so much opportunity.

Serving eight years active duty helped Rea discover her love of medicine through working in the burn unit of the Brooke Army Medical Center as a Respiratory Therapist. This experience, along with her own deployment in Kuwait, not only allowed her to serve her fellow soldiers, but also exposed her to the unique challenges facing military medical facilities and providers. Rea’s patients suffered from a blend of physical and mental health issues resulting from their exposure to stress and trauma in war zones. Rea saw that there was a great need for medical providers who could relate to these patients. Following her service, the desire to further help these patients motivated Rea to pursue the college education that once seemed foreign and out of reach after high school. The Army had opened Rea’s eyes to her full potential and inspired her to devote the rest of her life to improving the lives of others as a medical care provider.

Pursuing a degree as a Physician Assistant is the best way Rea feels she can live up to the Army values as well as her own, “Learn and Return.” Rea plans to continue to serve the military community, providing the much-needed care and health services to the underserved population of VA hospitals. As an unconventional student with unconventional life experiences, Rea plans to add a different perspective and appreciation for life because she has seen firsthand how quickly life can slip away.



KAREN GALLAGHER

U.S. Army | Arizona State University | Ph.D., Speech and Hearing Science



“THE ENTIRETY OF MY MILITARY SERVICE AND TRAINING TAUGHT ME THAT ANYTHING I DESIGN TO DO IS POSSIBLE, SUCCESS IS A CHOICE, AND THE ONLY FAILURE IS GIVING UP.”

For Karen, enlisting in the U.S. Army shifted her beliefs about success and failure in life. After reading about women in the military in a Sunday newspaper, a switch was flipped inside of her; a sense of uncertainty gave way to a sense of purpose. Against family expectation, she secretly sought out a local recruiter and left for basic and Airborne training shortly after her high school graduation. Today, she credits the Army with teaching her that success is a choice, and the only failure is giving up. After her deployment to Desert Storm, she earned her Bachelor's degree and Master's degree while caring for her disabled child, commuting an hour each way to school, and waiting tables on the weekends. When people ask her how she did all of that and earned entrance into the top speech-pathology program in the country, she has only one answer: "I didn't know it wasn't possible."

At Arizona State University, Karen is now pursuing her Ph.D. in Speech and Hearing Science, with a research focus on the effects of mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) and other service-related conditions on cognition in military veterans, especially those entering college. Her interest in service-related conditions is deeply personal. In the context of her research, she has met many student veterans who have reached out with concerns about their memory and ability to learn, reporting difficulties affecting academic performance. Although the VA has taken some measures to improve treatment of service-related issues such as mTBI and PTSD, she sees too many students falling through the cracks because their symptoms are less visible than those that typically qualify for on-going treatment.

As a doctoral student, she recently earned a grant from the Disabled Veterans National Foundation, and hopes to establish a multidisciplinary center on campus that provides cognitive coaching, counseling, and transition support services to student veterans in order to improve their outcomes. Upon completion of her program, she intends to continue her research in a tenure-track faculty position that will allow her to expand her research of service-related conditions and possible treatments for the military community.



ANDREA GOLDSTEIN

U.S. Navy | Tufts University | M.A., Law and Diplomacy



“THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IS IN A NATION’S SELF-INTEREST: SECURITY INCREASES WHEN DRAWING FROM 100% OF A NATION’S TALENT.”

The granddaughter of Jewish refugees who fled persecution in Germany, Poland, and Russia, Andrea grew up educated, and free to practice her faith, never once considered anything other than American. An obligation to uphold the American ideals that made this possible and a sense of civic duty led her to join the Navy upon graduating from college. As an officer, she spent nearly seven years of active military service in naval intelligence, including three years with Naval Special Warfare. In that role, she was able to draw attention to challenges faced by other female service members that her male peers were unaware of, but were happy to resolve. This experience led her to shift her focus of public service from broad admiration for American ideals, to a strong conviction that the U.S. can and should lead the way when it comes to empowering women to lead, particularly in non-traditional fields.

As she now pursues her Master’s in Law and Diplomacy at Tufts, Andrea believes that inclusion of women is in a nation’s best self-interest: security increases when drawing from 100% of a nation’s talent. Over time, she also believes that social equality will grow from service in the armed forces as marginalized populations have the opportunity to prove themselves indispensable while risking life and limb. Long term, she hopes to develop a framework to influence policies that will improve women’s status internationally. By leading a non-profit organization, she believes she can combine her practical experience with research and knowledge of policy and organizational practice to empower women to lead in fields where women are underrepresented.



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ROBERT HAM

U.S. Army | University of Southern California | MFA, Film Production



“I ABSOLUTELY BELIEVE THAT GREAT STORYTELLING PARTNERED WITH ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS CAN MAKE GREAT CHANGE.”

Growing up in Los Angeles as the son of musician and artists, Robert always aspired to be a film director. With 9/11 impacting him, Robert decided to finish college first and pursue the military later. Upon graduation, Robert was distracted by Hollywood, becoming disillusioned and really thinking deeply about who it was that he wanted to be. Feeling a personal calling to serve his country during a time of war, Robert's decision to join the Army as a combat documentarian forever changed his life in the best ways possible. Robert has gone to more than a dozen countries, including a combat tour in Afghanistan, in order to tell soldiers' stories. He's witnessed and told stories of extreme courage and evil in some of the most unimaginable circumstances and believes storytelling is the best way for us as humans to connect and share our values.

Now back in Los Angeles, Robert is studying to be a director working towards his Master's Degree in Film/TV at University of Southern California. Robert feels the experiences and skills he's gained in the military will help him tell truthful and human stories both about the Soldier and those we have tried to help. Robert is currently developing a short film that he'll be turning into a feature film called 'The Interpreter'. The story is based off of Robert's experiences with his interpreter while deployed to Afghanistan. With a film like 'The Interpreter,' Robert hopes to illuminate and help change the bureaucracy that keeps us from following through with the promise we made to them.



LUCAS HANSEN

U.S. Army | University of St. Thomas | M.A., Counseling Psychology



“POSITIVE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE, AND I PLAN ON BEING A PRINCIPAL FORCE BEHIND IT.”

After college, Lucas deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan, serving in various leadership roles. But when he returned from Iraq, however, he faced a new challenge: multiple soldiers within his company were suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress. The issues his former soldiers faced haunted him and opened his eyes to the need for better, more effective, mental health care for soldiers ultimately fueling his current pursuit of an M.A. in Counseling Psychology.

At the local V.A. hospital, he now investigates PTSD treatment improvement for veterans. He is participating in research focused on the effect spirituality has on reducing PTSD symptoms, as well as another study that aims to help veterans, managing schizophrenia, work more effectively within their community. He is also investigating stigma within student populations studying to be health care providers, with the hope of identifying potential mental health biases early.

As a clinician, Lucas plans to work closely with the Minnesota National Guard, having already co-authored a proposal for a peer support network to make mental health more accessible for soldiers. Long term, he wants to expand mental health care innovation to the general public and participate in health care reform. Although he will always be concerned with giving back to veterans, he recognizes that there are countless others in the community who need better treatment options as well.



ANTHONY HATALA

U.S. Marine Corps | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | Master of Business Administration



“THE MARINES TAUGHT ME TO ALWAYS HAVE A BIAS FOR ACTION. I LEARNED THAT PROGRESS DOES NOT MATERIALIZE FROM COMPLAINTS AND CHANGE DOES NOT JUST HAPPEN FROM THE SIDELINES.”

After the 9/11 attacks, as the country mobilized and subsequently deployed for war, Anthony felt the call to serve. On campus as a senior at Brown University, he witnessed intense discussion and thoughtful criticism of the U.S. military’s actions; yet, in his mind students weren’t getting involved to be the men and women in the arena, the ones actually taking risks and making tactical decisions in critical moments. He felt this was both a neglected responsibility and a missed opportunity. Although he agreed with some of the critiques, he found his classmates’ collective absence from the ranks troubling. On the weekend of his college graduation, with the university president in attendance, he was the only graduate of the roughly 1400 in his class to receive a military commission.

Over the past twelve years, the Marine Corps has taught Anthony to always have a bias for action. He learned that progress does not materialize from complaints and change does not just happen from the sidelines. While in uniform, he worked to improve efficiency in the Department of Defense because he abhorred the waste of time and human capital caused by outdated applications, policies, and procedures. As a junior officer, who frequently struggled to find resources on bases where he was training, he designed a database and built an application that would consolidate tens of thousands of phone numbers across hundreds of military bases. The information was managed centrally and consumed locally, enabling users to automatically pull the most current information right to their phone or computer. Since then, BaseDirectory.com has grown into a huge, multi-year project and has helped over 1.5 million service members connect with the services they need.

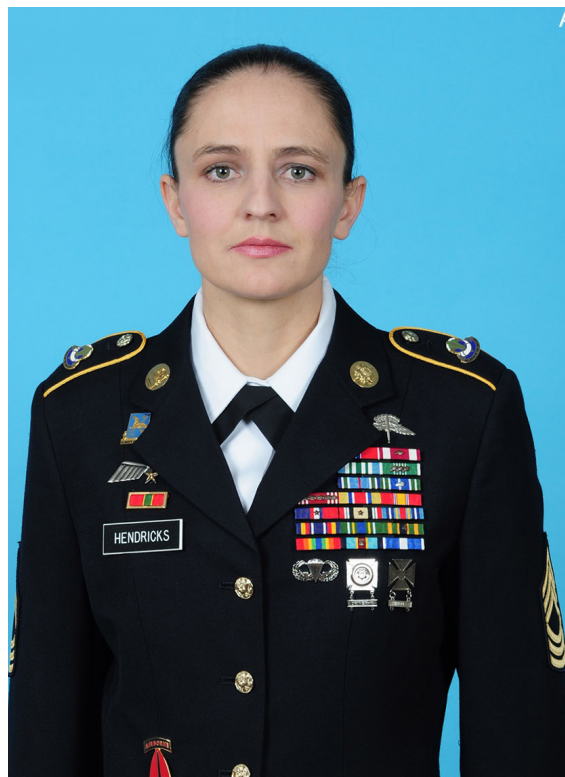
By pursuing his MBA from MIT Sloan, Anthony wants to strengthen his leadership skills to serve at the intersection of technology and public service. Through his affinity for tech, desire to fix broken systems, and love for working on teams, he wants to help bring great technology to government because he knows the transformative impact it can have on communities both within and beyond the military.



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KHALIDA HENDRICKS

U.S. Army | The Ohio State University | Ph.D., Theoretical Particle Physics



“I HAVE BEEN HUMBLLED BY BRILLIANT YOUNG WOMEN WHO HAVE TOLD ME THAT I AM A ROLE MODEL TO THEM. I HOPE TO INSPIRE WOMEN TO REACH FOR THEIR DREAMS FOR AS LONG AS I CAN.”

Enlisting in the Army right out of high school, Khalida intended to enlist for five years then get out and go to college. Looking to secure a place on a Human Intelligence Team (HUMINT) in Kosovo, Khalida taught herself Albanian and was eventually selected for the U.S. Army Parachute Team. Over 13 years, she traveled to 30 different countries, discovering along the way a fascination with particle physics. Deciding that she wanted to be a scientist, Khalida switched to the Army Reserves in order to go to college. The most important thing Khalida learned in the Army was perspective. Her military service has given her tremendous gratitude for everything she has and through that gratitude, renewed motivation to continue working towards her goals.

Though eligible for retirement soon, Khalida plans to stay in the Army Reserves for as long as she can and intends to earn a Ph.D. in theoretical particle physics, do a post-doctorate position and become a university professor. With women still extremely underrepresented in science in general and physics in particular, Khalida feels she could be an important role model for budding female scientists at a small state university. The experiences of women in physics are not unlike what Khalida faced in the military: always being surrounded by men and learning ways to survive in such environments while doing other physically and mentally challenging tasks. Humbled by brilliant young women who have told her that she is a role model to them, Khalida hopes to inspire women to reach for their dreams for as long as she can.



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ANTHONY JOHNSON

U.S. Army | Northern Illinois University | Ph.D., Health Sciences



“I BELIEVE THAT THOUGH WE MAY TRAVEL SIMILAR PATHS, EVERY PERSON IS BORN INTO THE WORLD TO DO SOMETHING UNIQUE AND DISTINCTIVE.”

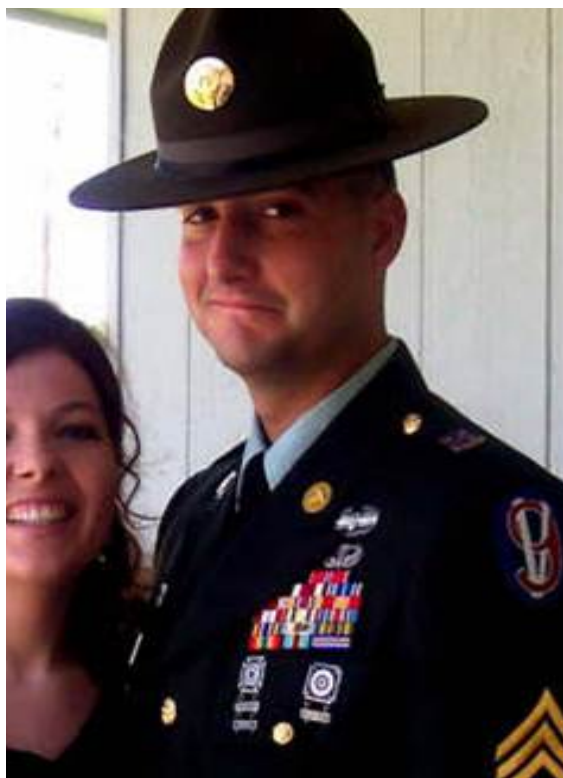
Growing up on Chicago's south side in a low-income housing project amidst crime and violence, as high school graduation neared Anthony knew he did not want to become a product of his environment but rather do something meaningful, resulting in him joining the Army. Channeling a high level of respect and dedication for opportunities earned and individuals he represents, Anthony promised himself to go above and beyond to make sure that he represents the body of people who paid the ultimate sacrifice as best as he could. It was through his six years of military experiences in seeing some of his fellow soldiers struggle with PTSD as well as a close family member's struggles with mental health that Anthony started looking into what PTSD was and how it affects one's thought patterns and the concept of non-military PTSD.

Enrolled at Northern Illinois University, Anthony will be studying to complete a Ph.D. in Health Science, doing his dissertation on the association of crime in Illinois and mental health with a focus on non-military PTSD with the hopes of using the study to offer alternative views and resolutions into the psychosocial dynamics of conflict resolution in Chicago. Anthony's main objective in his pursuit of the Ph.D. in Health Sciences degree is to put himself in a position to assist in the materialization, advancement, and overall progression of issues and disparities that adversely affect our communities. With his life's experiences thus far, Anthony has been provided with the internal passion and sense of purpose that will ultimately aid him in understanding and advancing.



SETH KASTLE

U.S. Army | Baker University | Ed.D., Leadership in Higher Education



“THE WORLD IS FULL OF PEOPLE WHO ARE STUCK BEING PASSENGERS IN LIFE. I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT I DON’T HAVE A HAND IN MY DESTINY.”

As a young man, Seth spent most of his time making poor decision after poor decision. In high school, the voice of his mother - “college or the military” - pushed him to meet with the first Army recruiter that came to his school. In 1998, halfway through his senior year, Seth enlisted in the Army - not realizing at the time that it would be one of the most impactful decisions of his life.

After returning home from his second deployment in 2004, Seth struggled greatly and admits he was in denial for several years that the problems he was facing were related to PTSD. Finally, in 2011, he sought help for himself and his family, realizing he had to make a change or lose everything. His personal struggles, both as a veteran and parent to daughters who only knew a “post-war” father, led him to write the children’s book *Why Is Dad So Mad? A Book About PTSD And Military Families*. The book - which explains PTSD to children - has made its way into a great deal of military family households. Though he retired in 2014, this sense of service above self was without question the most important lesson that Seth took from his military career. The Army taught him to follow his passion and that in doing this there are no limits to what can be accomplished.

Now, as a faculty member in the Department of Leadership Studies at Fort Hays State University, he has had the opportunity to pass along his passion for civic engagement through both academic discipline and classroom interaction. As he pursues his Ed.D. in Leadership in Higher Education from Baker University, he is focusing his teaching as much as possible on service learning activities; he strives to create a citizenry educated in the importance of civic engagement. After completing his doctorate, Seth plans to pursue appointment on the Veterans Claims Assistance Program (VCAP) Advisory Board through the Kansas Commission of Veterans Affairs. Through this office, he wants to have higher levels of influence regarding policy and benefits for Kansas’ veterans.



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MITCHELL LAFORTUNE

U.S. Army | UCLA | MFA, Film & Television



“I WANT TO USE MY EXPERIENCE FROM THE ARMY TO PORTRAY THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND EXAMINE THE MORALITY OF OUR CONDUCT IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.”

Driven by a desire to not just experience the world, but to be a constructive participant in U.S. foreign policy, Mitchell joined the Army in 2006. The former English major found himself catapulted in an entirely new direction in life, developing counterinsurgency strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan during his deployments to the region. His invaluable time in service earned him a job with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), where he worked alongside senior policymakers on Iran’s malign influence. Mitchell would return to Afghanistan twice more in support of U.S. combat operations, relying upon his experiences and skills learned from his time in the Army.

With the goal of earning a Masters of Fine Arts from UCLA, Mitchell aspires to create films that educate and accurately reflect the reality of U.S. foreign policy and the complexities of the Middle East. Mitchell is currently working on a project that examines violence, radicalization and the impact of war on combat veterans post 9/11.



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ASHLEY LA RUE

Military Spouse | University of Oklahoma | M.A., International Relations



“SAVING THE WORLD IS AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, BUT HAVING THE ABILITY AND LOVE TO IMPACT ONE LIFE CAN LEAD TO BIG CHANGES.”

Her experience volunteering in Dakar, Senegal taught Ashley how having the ability to love and impact one life can lead to big changes and connecting with communities shatters the idea we are all different. Throughout her husband's 16 years of service in the United States Army, Ashley has been inspired by his love and service to a cause greater than himself and aspired to follow in his footsteps. Setting aside her education plans in 2008 to support her husband's military career, Ashley had the experience of working at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal and seeing first hand the different United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiatives within the West African region - leading her to research careers within the U.S. Government and other international organizations.

With a Master's degree in International Relations, Ashley hopes to gain knowledge to return to West Africa and start her career. During her time volunteering in the Poupponniere Orphanage, Ashley was reminded the children at Poupponniere do not need saving; rather their mothers need adequate prenatal care and access to education in order to provide for their family. Her time in Senegal taught her it's not always about fixing the immediate problem but more so about helping individual communities with the tools they need to thrive. Ashley's husband continues to be a constant inspiration to her, fueling her desire to go forward and be an inspiration to others.



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LIZ LOUIS

U.S. Air Force | Stanford University | Master of Business Administration
Johns Hopkins University | M.A., International Economics and International Relations



“A TEAM CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN ITS MEMBERS CAN INDIVIDUALLY AND HAS A FORMIDABLE, POSITIVE EFFECT ON ITS MEMBERS AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY.”

Upon arriving at Princeton University her freshman year, Liz realized she had a strong inclination to serve in the military so she signed up for Air Force ROTC and never looked back. Serving 16 months overseas across 12 different countries, Liz developed a much greater appreciation of global challenges, the people of the world, and what is possible, defining and expanding her ambitions. As a result, Liz plans to invest in communities vulnerable terrorism by building renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure to improve living conditions, minimize harm to the environment, and prevent violent extremism.

Liz's military experience, specifically building and leading teams and managing multinational task forces, has directly prepared her to build alliances of like-minded people, devise strategic and tactical plans, obtain funding, and execute the operation. The most important lesson Liz learned throughout her time in the service is that a strong team is essential and can accomplish more than its members can individually, having a positive effect on the surrounding community. Liz plans to incorporate her experience from the military and shape her professional path to serve others while continuing to pay it forward as a mentor in whatever capacity she can be value-added.



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NICK MARSH

U.S. Army | Indiana University | M.S., Medical Physics



“THE GREATEST LESSON I’VE LEARNED FROM MY SERVICE HAS BEEN TO HONOR THOSE THAT HAVE PAID THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE BY INVESTING IN FELLOW SOLDIERS, VETERANS AND MY COMMUNITY.”

Nick was inspired by his younger brother and followed his lead in joining the Army National Guard. He felt he could serve his community and country while also continuing to accomplish his educational goals. During his 2011 deployment to Afghanistan, Nick’s mission was to support a route clearance company as a combat medic. Several members of Nick’s unit gave the ultimate sacrifice, but the determination to accomplish the mission was never lost. Nick decided the best way to remember and honor his fallen comrades would be to invest in his fellow soldiers through helping student veterans accomplish their goals.

Currently working towards his master’s degree in medical physics at Indiana University, Nick is interested in the treatment of cancers with radiation and the improvement of these techniques. It is Nick’s passion to assure Veterans in need are taken care of. Through his involvement in the Student Veterans of America at Indiana University and the Peer Advisors for Veteran Education program, Nick has helped ensure that any student Veteran or dependent has a place to go should they need anything. Upon completing his master’s program, Nick hopes to lead the radiation oncology centers at several VA hospitals, assuring that standards are set high for every patient treated.



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JEREMY MARX

U.S. Army | Georgetown University | Doctor of Medicine



“BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIVES OF THE RANGERS IN MY COMPANY AND PLATOON WAS A HEAVY WEIGHT THAT CHALLENGED AND TRANSFORMED ME. I LEARNED THAT EVEN THE SMALLEST MISTAKE COULD COST A LIFE.”

Driven by a passion for service and desire to join the fight, Jeremy left the Air Force Academy after his first year of college to enlist in the Army. Over the next nine years serving as a Ranger medic, he deployed six times to both Iraq and Afghanistan, lost nearly a dozen friends, and became plagued with chronic injuries of his own. He cites his time serving as a Ranger as trial by fire. Being responsible for the lives of the Rangers in his company and platoon was a heavy weight that challenged and transformed him in stressful circumstances. He learned to pay attention to even the smallest details because a mistake could cost a life.

After medically retiring in 2014, Jeremy was inspired to take the MCAT to see if he could translate his Ranger Medic skills into a new vocation as a physician. Now, as a medical student at Georgetown University, he believes the combat experiences that he lived through, the trauma patients that he treated, and the military schooling that he overcame will serve him well as he undergoes the rigorous challenges of becoming a physician. Eventually, he hopes to continue to serve the military community by volunteering with the VA. In the future, he also intends to pay it forward by establishing a Ranger Medic scholarship program that will financially support and emotionally assist any Ranger Medic who wants to pursue medical school as well.



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KATE MCKENNEY

Military Spouse | Johns Hopkins University | Ed.D., Entrepreneurial Leadership in Education



“THROUGH MY WORK WITH MILITARY FAMILIES AND MY SERVICE AS A MILITARY SPOUSE, I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE DIVERSITY WITHIN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST STRENGTHS.”

After earning her Master’s Degree in Education, Kate achieved her dream to teach in underserved schools. For seven years, she taught elementary through community college in schools that faced poverty, corruption, violence, and underfunding. Inspired by her husband’s service as a Marine and by other military families, Kate was impressed by the military’s shared values of service, duty, and care for one another, igniting her her passion for working with military families. Utilizing her background in education, Kate was able to serve in leadership roles within Family Readiness and the Children, Youth, and Teen Program for several years aboard their installation.

With their family being transferred to another duty station in 2014 and her husband preparing to deploy, Kate was unemployed with three young children but still was committed to serve her community. Faced with the lack of flexible, affordable, high-quality early childhood programs in her new community, Kate designed an alternative preschool with military families in mind. With support from her husband, the local community and dedication of many parents, Kate’s vision blossomed into a fully enrolled, operation preschool with 70% military families within eight months.

Recognizing the excess demand by military families for flexible, affordable choices for high-quality early childhood education programs, Kate has her sights set on earning her Doctorate in Entrepreneurship Leadership in Education at Johns Hopkins University. Upon earning her degree Kate’s vision is to apply the knowledge and expertise gained through her coursework and research to create a model preschool program that will promote school readiness in military children, which can be duplicated at any military installation.



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MATTHEW MICLETTE

U.S. Army | University of Pennsylvania | Master of Public Health & Social Policy



“MY EXPERIENCE IN THE ARMY HAS GIVEN ME NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD AND MY PLACE WITHIN IT.”

For Matt, the Army has provided the opportunity to care for service members, while becoming a leader in health care. As he began his career at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), he did so not knowing what to expect with limited clinical and life experience. That all changed quickly working as a nurse. While serving at WRAMC and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, he often received patients within five days of their initial injuries, most from Afghanistan, and witnessed up close the tragedy of war. Of the five quadruple amputee patients injured during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, three have been his patients.

As debilitating as the physical injuries were, Matt learned it was the invisible injuries that were often most overlooked and particularly challenging for those in his care. So in 2013, he began the next phase of his career as a behavioral health nurse, working with patients suffering from PTSD. Over time, providing care to service members with physical and psychological trauma has strengthened his commitment to the veteran community. Now, as he pursues a Master of Public Health (MPH) and Master of Science in Social Policy (MSSP), he aspires to work on public health policies that improve behavioral health resources for Veterans and underserved populations, especially rural and impoverished communities.

Working in the field of public health policy, Matt wants to specifically identify barriers to care, identify successful local programs, and improve or eliminate programs not meeting performance objectives. By working for the government, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, or for a non-profit organization in which the mission is to provide high quality behavioral health services, he ultimately hopes to reduce medical costs and improve overall health outcomes utilizing principles of preventative medicine.



KEVIN MOTT

U.S. Marine Corps | Harvard University | Masters of Business Administration & Public Policy



“IT IS NOT ENOUGH JUST TO WELCOME VETERANS BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY; WE MUST DO IT IN A WAY THAT PREPARES THEM TO BE AS SUCCESSFUL OUT OF UNIFORM AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE MILITARY.”

Growing up in a military family, Kevin always knew he wanted to do his part, yet had not decided what form that service would take following 9/11. The events of that day inspired him to serve on the front lines, where he felt he could make the most difference. Kevin commissioned as a Marine infantry officer, deploying to Afghanistan and learning important lessons about leadership. While learning a lot of lessons throughout his military career, the most important lesson Kevin learned while working in ambiguous and challenging environments in the military was that the toughest fight too often comes when it's time to take the uniform off. Returning from Afghanistan, Kevin watched dozens of his Marines struggle to make the difficult transition out of the military.

Kevin aspires to take what he has learned about leadership and teambuilding in the military, along with what he is learning at Harvard, and apply it to help create innovative solutions to help veterans make smart and effective transitions. Kevin's five years of service has inspired him to make a positive difference in the lives of veterans and he plans to leverage the unique experience and perspective gained from the joint Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School of Government degree program to positively influence policy and create solutions for struggling veterans everywhere. Kevin looks to leverage everything he has learned in the military and at Harvard to build a lasting partnership between government, universities and industry that provides mentorship for veterans and guides them through school and into leadership positions in business, nonprofits and government.



KATELYN NEWTON

Military Spouse | Arizona State University | DNP, Pediatric Primary Care



“WHILE I’VE NEVER BEEN IN A POSITION WHERE MY PHYSICAL SAFETY WAS AT STAKE, BOTH MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL SACRIFICES BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE SERVICE LINES WE CHOSE HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON IMPROVING THE LIVES OF OTHERS.”

Katelyn knows firsthand that service and sacrifice mean different things to different people. As a military spouse, she has faced the unique challenges of her husband’s service as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician. As a pediatric oncology nurse, she has personally faced moments where the decisions she had to make in a split second impacted whether or not a child lived. And she has drawn on her own experience within the military community - facing long separations, frequent relocations and day to day worry about a loved one’s well-being - to extend support and healing to their families.

Inspired by her husband’s commitment to serve, she dedicates an extensive amount of time to volunteer her medical skills at camps for children with cancer, special events serving children in foster care and their families, and schools as far away as Tanzania. Collectively, these experiences - while supporting her husband through his career - have made her more well-rounded and taught her about her strengths, limitations, and the many ways that she can utilize her talents.

At Arizona State University, she is now pursuing her Doctorate of Nursing Practice in pediatrics to continue making an impact in the lives of children and families during their greatest times of need. By utilizing the unique skill sets she has developed in her personal and professional life, she believes that she can make a significant difference in pediatric oncology and pediatric palliative care to improve the lives of children facing life-threatening illness.



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ASHLEY NICOLAS

U.S. Army | Georgetown University | Juris Doctor



“THE ARMY AWAKENED WITHIN ME A HEART OF SERVICE THAT WILL LEAD ME FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.”

Following graduation from West Point, Ashley branched Army Intelligence and served the majority of her five active-duty years in the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division (4-2 SBCT). During that time, she deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, where she worked both as a Female Engagement Team Leader and a Brigade Assistant Intelligence Officer, supporting infantry units in a very hostile and kinetic region of southern Afghanistan.

Although deployment was a difficult time of personal sacrifice, the lessons she learned and the perspective she gained on the ground proved invaluable. In intelligence, she worked with many soldiers who, due to the quality of their high school education, struggled to conduct the high level analysis and critical thinking that was necessary for their jobs. Further, she witnessed the plight of Afghan women who, based solely on gender, had been denied any form of formal education. As a result, they were completely eliminated from official positions of influence in the country and lacked a voice in discussion of their nation's future. Together, these experiences eventually drew Ashley to continue her service with Teach for America. As a mathematics and computer science teacher in San Jose, she continued to witness institutionalized barriers for success that have been constructed for many female and minority students in underprivileged communities.

Her experiences, both in combat and in the classroom, have pushed her to pursue a new path as an attorney. With insight into bureaucratic and policy inefficiencies that cause and further institutional injustice, she hopes to fuse her interests in human rights and national security to find a meaningful way to continue her service to be a driver of change, to question the status quo, and to push for systemic reform.



SANGKI OAK

U.S. Navy | University of Pittsburgh | Doctor of Medicine



“AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT’S NOT ABOUT AWARDS, PRESTIGE, OR PERSONAL GAIN. IT’S ABOUT PEOPLE. THE FIGHT IS FOR YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS NEXT TO YOU IN COMBAT, THE INDIVIDUALS IN THE VILLAGES, AND FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.”

The path that led Sangki to the military was a somewhat serendipitous journey. At the time of the events on 9/11, he was working as a computer engineer in Silicon Valley. Although he felt a strong call to serve in the aftermath of the attacks, he was unsure if he was too old and ingrained as an engineer to enlist. One morning though, he picked up the newspaper and read a story about an NFL football player who was walking away from a multi-million dollar contract to serve with the Army Rangers. Soon after, the excuses that held him back quickly faded away.

Fast-forward through years of training, Sangki found himself in the dusty hills of northwestern Afghanistan as the senior medic for a team of U.S. Marines. There, a large portion of the team’s efforts were focused on improving the governance, development, and health of the population. It was during that deployment, seeing sick and injured locals, drinking many cups of tea with village elders, and helping to improve health infrastructure, that Sangki developed a passion to improve the lives of those in medically underserved communities worldwide. His time in Afghanistan was his first real exposure to people caught in the crossfires of conflict. His position as a medic, as well as the team member in charge of aid and development efforts for the local population, familiarized him with the needs and struggles of others in some of the most remote parts of the world.

Since leaving the military, his passion for medicine has been reinforced by visits with Syrian refugees near the border of Iraq to document the disposition of their camps, as well as by providing medical care to those affected by the earthquake in Nepal. Spurred by these collective experiences, he wants to not only provide medical care to people in areas medically underserved due to their austere or dangerous location, but also expand the health infrastructure of their communities. As he continues his journey through medical school, he credits the military with providing him the temperament and skills to operate in these harsh and remote places, the capability to work effectively both within a team and independently, and the aptitude to develop solutions with limited resources.



DAVID PARKINSON

U.S. Air Force | University of Oregon | M.S., Sports Product Management



“I CAN MAKE THE OUTDOORS MORE ACCESSIBLE AND SAFER FOR THE COMMUNITY BY DEVELOPING RELIABLE PRODUCTS FOR OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS.”

Growing up learning about his grandfather's service in World War II and his father's combined 14 years of service with the Army and Navy led David to the United States Air Force while struggling to provide for his family as he pursued a college education. David knew the Air Force would provide him with the opportunity to complete his college education and provide for his family all while serving and giving back to the American people. Unable to complete his degree as quickly as intended, David felt he had made a mistake joining the military but soon realized he needed to learn more about himself and see where his real mission in life lies - outdoors and helping others.

Throughout his nine years of service with the Air Force, the strong work ethic, dedication and self-realization David learned has inspired him to combine his two passions, helping others enjoy the outdoors by providing them with the equipment they need to be safe in their outdoor pursuits. David's experiences in the Air Force leading multiple high-value strategic projects will help him be successful as a Sports Product Manager in the outdoors industry. With community also being very important to David, he spent the final two years of his enlistment volunteering with Southern Arizona Rescue Association where he helped rescue individuals who were lost or injured and plans to continue his commitment wherever his career takes him. David's community service will help him develop safer, more reliable products for outdoor enthusiasts as he can see firsthand how gear can be improved to help prevent individuals from getting into life threatening situations.



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AMIE PFLAUM

U.S. Army | North Carolina State University | Doctor of Veterinary Medicine



“BY BRIDGING AGRICULTURE AND HUMAN MEDICINE, I BELIEVE I CAN BEST IMPROVE OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE BY HELPING TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL.”

In September 2001, Amie watched the pain of the 9/11 attacks cut deeply into her tight-knit suburb outside Washington, D.C. as friends buried parents and siblings who were lost in the Pentagon. Not coming from a military family, the idea of joining the service to help fight the War on Terror was a scary prospect. Doing nothing, however, was scarier. She spent the next four years learning the art of leadership as a ROTC Cadet, and in 2006 commissioned and joined the Army's Aviation Corps as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot.

Since then, Amie has spent a decade serving across the globe, and informed by those experiences now aspires to serve as a public health veterinarian for the U.S. Government. While stationed in Honduras, the saying, 'Give a man a fish and feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime,' took on a profound meaning. Part of her aviation unit's mission was to help provide humanitarian assistance and medical care to impoverished Central American and Caribbean communities. As the company commander, she led numerous aid delivery missions throughout Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Belize, where she discovered how veterinary and public health services are vital to ensuring the health of local populations' tenuous food sources and preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases.

While teaching community members how to properly care for and cultivate their animals, she watched as veterinarians promoted the establishment of sustainable animal agriculture, significantly improving family health and income potential. Serving these villagers, she realized the greatest concern of most global communities is food security, so that they may provide a healthier future for their often-undernourished children. This awareness has set her life course. Guided by her passion for medicine and global service, Amie is now pursuing her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. With her understanding of species epidemiology and the ecology of zoonotic and foodborne diseases, she hopes to improve animal and human health in the U.S. and abroad.



ADAM POPP

U.S. Air Force | George Washington University | M.A., Rehabilitation Counseling



“I KNOW THAT WHEN I FUSE THAT HARD-WON EXPERIENCE WITH A FORMAL EDUCATION, I WILL BE EVEN BETTER EQUIPPED TO ASSIST OTHERS IN OVERCOMING THEIR CHALLENGES, AND MAXIMIZING THEIR POTENTIAL.”

Yearning to be part of something bigger than himself and walk a path of purpose and service that would test every facet of his being, Adam entered the United States Air Force in 1997, becoming motivated and inspired everyday. The most important lessons Adam learned during his 12 years in the service came during his recovery at Walter Reed after losing his leg to an IED in Afghanistan. During his 18-month recovery, Adam had the opportunity to learn from others recovering from a wide range of injuries and disabilities, witnessing first-hand the ways in which individuals handle the process of healing. Most importantly, Adam learned how important mentors, healthcare providers, and support networks are to a successful recovery. By the end of his stay, Adam had made the pledge to himself that he would serve to empower veterans in every way possible.

Having had the privilege of spending 19 years working within the military community, including the most recent nine years working with men and women battling both invisible and visible injuries, Adam’s main focus now is to pursue a degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from George Washington University. This program will enable him to become a Rehabilitation Counselor focused on veterans with disabilities, with the goal of working with military or private hospitals, the VA, non-profits, or other treatment centers. Adam knows when he combines his hard-won experience with a formal education, he will be even better equipped to assist others in overcoming their challenges, accomplishing their goals, and maximizing their potential.



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MIKE PRITTS

U.S. Army | Colorado College | M.A.T., Secondary Social Studies



“OF ALL THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS I HAVE EARNED, I TAKE THE MOST PRIDE IN WITNESSING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THOSE SOLDIERS WHO I’VE COACHED ALONG THE WAY.”

Mike graduated high school early so he could enlist in the Army at the age of 17. His passion for lifelong learning has motivated him to learn specialized and advanced skills that have helped him contribute to the military organizations he was assigned to, while fueling his desire to obtain a higher education. Having been fortunate to experience many cultures and to witness first hand how people handle adverse situations, Mike learned that the one common characteristic among our military partners is resilience. A characteristic that can be applied across a broad spectrum of industry, resilience is something Mike will bring into his Master’s program and the career field of Education.

Since retiring after 30 years of service in the military, Mike has been working with students in the Fountain-Fort Carson School District in Colorado. He intends to become a high school social studies teacher and would like to continue working with children from military families as a full-time teacher helping them achieve their educational goals. Having led organizations from 12 to over 1,000 in both peacetime and combat, as a high school teacher Mike’s leadership experience will be put to work in the classroom and with his fellow faculty members while keeping him engaged with his military family community.



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JUAN RAMOS

U.S. Army | Liberty University | Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine



“MY SUCCESS IS MEASURED ON HOW I WILL IMPACT THE LIVES OF OTHERS THROUGH MY JOURNEY.”

Inspired to join the military in the aftermath of 9/11, Juan solidified his commitment and made the decision to enlist in the Army, learning the limitations he placed on himself paled in comparison to what he was capable of doing. As his career progressed Juan's yearn for excellence grew but his body wore down. No longer able to physically stand next to his brother warriors, Juan had to find a purpose and a place among them and in the midst of his circumstances, learning how to truly succeed and be a great leader. Juan does not measure his success on how his journey impacted his life, but how he will impact the lives of others through his journey.

Serving 13 years as an Army Medic, Juan was able to treat and care for patients on a daily basis, but not quench his full passion to pursue medicine. With a desire to provide services to those who otherwise would not be able to afford them, Juan is on the path to becoming a first generation college graduate working towards his medical degree from Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Juan intends to serve veterans in any way that he can, believing that we were put on this earth to help one another and intends on not only doing that himself, but raising his family with giving and service minded hearts. The military has taught Juan that regardless of rank or time in service, the amount of work and passion put into your career is what is going to make not only a great leader, but someone that is looked upon in times of need.



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AMY RIEDEL

U.S. Navy | The Ohio State University | Juris Doctor



“OUR FUTURE LIES IN THE EXPLORATION AND UTILIZATION OF SPACE RESOURCES. EXPANDING THE LEGAL BACKBONE WILL ENCOURAGE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE EXPLORATION WHICH BENEFIT HUMANITY IN WAYS THAT WE CANNOT PREDICT.”

Inspired by her parent’s service and dedication to family and country, Amy worked hard to earn acceptance to the Naval Academy and commission as a Surface Warfare Officer. Throughout her military service, she learned the importance of collaborating as a team to achieve common purpose, a critical lesson that she believes will help advance the next step of human development: creating a multi-planetary civilization.

Although the international community has created a basic legal framework to operate within, Amy believes current domestic laws and international treaties still leave significant ambiguities for space exploration and resource utilization. As a Naval Officer, her firsthand experience operating with the maritime legal framework provided her with a strong basis to approach the difficulties of space law, from de-conflicting traffic rules to the intricacies of resource ownership. As a lawyer, she wants to develop new space regulations and establish a regulatory body that benefit citizens, while encouraging responsible colonization and commercialization through advances in technology.



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JORDAN RITENOUR

U.S. Army | Stanford University | Juris Doctor & Master of Business Administration



“MY DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN PROVIDED ME WITH A TERRIFYING PICTURE OF WHAT SOCIETY LOOKS LIKE WITHOUT THE RULE OF LAW.”

The son of an Air Force veteran, Jordan credits the military with teaching him invaluable lessons about the relationship between personal responsibility and trust. In Afghanistan, he and his men fully embraced this sense of responsibility to one another, knowing every action they performed or failed to perform had direct consequences for the entire unit. But his service in Kandahar also provided him with a terrifying picture of what society looks like without the rule of law. Time and time again, his infantry platoon detained bomb makers and Taliban fighters that, due to either rampant corruption or incompetence, were subsequently released by the Afghan authorities.

A witness to government corruption, Jordan is now pursuing a joint law and business degree at Stanford University, hoping that his education will help him develop the rule of law and a robust, diverse economy in places where neither has existed before. More than ever, he believes that countries like Afghanistan require economic growth to support the development of institutions that can enforce the rule of law. From first hand experience, he knows there are Afghan entrepreneurs looking for ways to rebuild their country after nearly 40 years of conflict - and he wants to be on the frontlines to provide the financial and legal support they deserve.

In addition to his studies, Jordan actively volunteers with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), providing legal assistance to interpreters who have risked their lives fighting with U.S. service members. Through the Afghan Legal Education Program, he is also collaborating with an Afghan university to train the country's next generation of attorneys and judges. Taking the "long view" towards rule of law development, he is committed to empowering Afghans to develop their country, while simultaneously enabling fellow veterans to give back to the communities they fought in and attain some closure from their own combat experiences.



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ZACHARY SALAS

U.S. Navy | Dartmouth College | Doctor of Medicine



“I WANT TO LEVERAGE MY BACKGROUND AND LANGUAGE SKILLS TO REACH THE DIVERSE POPULATION OF AMERICANS WHO FEEL THAT THE MEDICAL SYSTEM IS NOT SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR NEEDS.”

A first generation Cuban-American growing up in a low-income household, as a child, for Zachary more emphasis was placed on getting a job and contributing to the household than achieving academic excellence. With his parents divorcing when he was seven, Zachary’s mother raised him and his siblings as a single parent, constantly struggling to put food on the table. Zachary started working full time in the ninth grade to help his mother make ends meet while struggling throughout his teenage years to find direction and purpose in life. Barely graduating from high school, it was evident that he would never achieve any of the goals that he had dreamed of if he did not change his circumstances. Dreaming of going to college, becoming a fighter pilot, or perhaps even a doctor, ultimately it was enlisting in the Navy that saved his life.

With the Navy providing him with the vehicle to pursue higher education and better his circumstances, Zachary became the first person in his family to graduate from high school, college, and earn a master’s degree. At the young age of five Zachary nearly lost his father to a house fire, leaving third degree burns over nearly seventy-five percent of his body and causing temporary blindness. Though too young to fully grasp the gravity of his injuries, it was during his recovery that the seed of medicine was first planted in Zachary, as he assisted changing his bandages and acting as his “seeing eye dog.” This first-hand experience ignited his unfailing desire for service to his fellow man. Following a highly successful military career, as a Naval Aviator, with proven commitment to service, sacrifice, and learning, Zachary finds himself full circle now in a position to follow his other dream of becoming a doctor, focusing on making a meaningful impact as a minority physician, and pursuing legislation and other avenues to shape the future landscape of the United States healthcare system.



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JEFFREY SARGENT

U.S. Army | University of South Florida | B.S., Health Sciences



“I BELIEVE THAT IT ONLY TAKES ONE MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL TO CHANGE A PERSON’S LIFE - I WILL BE THAT PROFESSIONAL.”

Ever since he was a child, Jeffrey had a deep passion to serve his country. Joining the Army in 1999, he served a year in Iraq in 2003 where he learned he had what it took to lead soldiers effectively in combat. Leading his squad of soldiers in 2006 during the surge, Jeffrey lost his platoon leader in an up-close ambush, learning the important lesson that genuine care and leadership is not just 'having the backs' of your soldiers, it's providing them the means to be successful in all situations and preparing them for any contingency. Standing in front of his peers and leadership about to be promoted to Sergeant First Class, Jeffrey started to feel dizzy and faint, suffering his first panic attack and the beginning of his downward spiral with PTSD.

As the need for mental health professionals trained in veteran issues increases, Jeffrey intends to become an Occupational Therapist with a focus on mental health and the daily living struggles Veterans with PTSD and TBI face. With a degree in Health Sciences from University of South Florida, Jeffrey will be focusing his education and training on helping veterans overcome mental health concerns and achieve success assimilating into civilian society through a holistic approach. Jeffrey intends to include nutrition, fitness, and physical and mental health counseling in the restructuring of afflicted Veterans, hoping to usher in an era of change based on his experiences as a patient.



JOHN SCHIPPERT

U.S. Marine Corps | University of Pennsylvania | Juris Doctor & Master of Business Administration



“MY ENDURING RESPECT FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO CHOOSE TO ENLIST IN OUR MILITARY CONTINUES TO DEFINE MY CAREER TRAJECTORY.”

Other than marrying his wife and becoming a father, serving as a Marine in combat has been the most important experience in John's life. Feeling called to military service at a young age, John aspired to become the best Marine officer possible in order to provide a platoon with the leadership they deserved while learning the valuable lesson of continuous self-improvement. The young men John was tasked with leading taught him the most important lesson of his military career - if a leader can truly empower a team rather than lead by micromanagement, that team would never find itself outmatched by an obstacle. With high respect for servicemen and women, John believes he can better serve them in roles other than remaining on active duty by contributing to the strategic discussion on national security policy. With John's old unit suffering devastating casualties, he vowed to one day earn a position from which he could influence national security policy in a manner worthy of the men and women who ultimately carry out the strategy.

Through his experience serving as Defense Fellow to a member of the House Armed Services Committee at the Pentagon, John learned that the most effective senior leaders were not only typically trained in law and policy, but also in business skills, enabling them to make decisions on the future size and capabilities of the military while facing shrinking budgets. Now pursuing a joint law and business degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the Wharton School of Business, John is committed to finding solutions to problems that are effective to both the defense of our nation and people who defend it.



STEPHEN SKIANO

U.S. Air Force | Midwestern University | M.M.S., Physician Assistant Studies



“DEVELOPING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO CONFIDENT, HEALTHY, HAPPY ADULTS IS THE BEST INVESTMENT I CAN MAKE IN THE FUTURE OF MY COMMUNITY. IT IS AN IMPACT THAT GROWS EXPONENTIALLY FOR GENERATIONS.”

Driven by a spirit of service and a desire to use his physical and intellectual talents to help those in need, Stephen enlisted in the U.S. Air Force to train as an elite Pararescueman and serve wounded soldiers behind enemy lines. As he prepared to leave for basic training that September, the 9/11 attacks reinforced his decision to serve. Though just 19 years old and 145 pounds, neither the 90% attrition rate for Pararescue training or the fact that he would certainly be sent to war immediately after completing training deterred his resolve. In fact, completing the long and rigorous training regimen gave Stephen the confidence that he could remain calm and persevere through anything that life put in his way.

Serving in Afghanistan, his resolve was especially tested when two of his friends and teammates were killed as their helicopter, Pedro 66, was shot down. Stephen deployed a short time later to fill the team leader role of his deceased teammate. For him, it quickly became an emotionally trying deployment. Every time his helicopter lifted off the runway, he fought off pervasive fears that he would not live through the day. By focusing on the mission at hand, he ultimately motivated himself and his team to navigate through the tragic atmosphere in their unit.

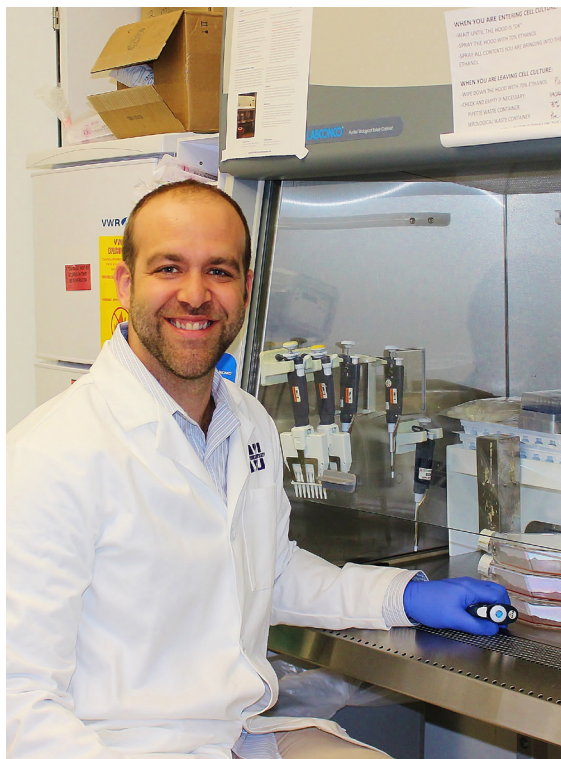
In the face of loss, his experiences overseas taught him that he could overcome any obstacle or adversity. Inspired to honor the sacrifice of his teammates, Stephen pushed himself to earn his undergraduate degree while serving on active duty, completing classes while deployed to Afghanistan and flying daily rescue operations. During Pararescue training, he also pursued an accelerated EMT paramedic program, while managing the rigors and stresses of the Pararescue schoolhouse.

Now, separated from the military and serving as full-time police officer, Stephen's new goal is to earn his master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies from Midwestern University. As a PA, he hopes to contribute to community programs in the Phoenix area that spread comprehensive basic medical knowledge and life-saving skills to those in need. He also remains committed to helping the youth in his community by promoting a healthy, active, physically and mentally fit lifestyle, while instilling in them the lessons he learned in the military.



ANTHONY SPRANGERS

U.S. Army | Northwestern University | Ph.D., Biomedical Engineering



“MY WORK ETHIC AND CORE VALUES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED WHILE IN THE MILITARY; IT’S ALLOWED ME TO GET TO WHERE I AM TODAY.”

With a desire to help, make a difference and save lives, Anthony joined the Army in 2003 at the age of 18, with aspirations of becoming a medic. After serving five years, including two tours in Iraq, Anthony was transformed both physically and mentally, motivating him to go where he needed to be successful - the library. Graduating with honors in Scientific Research from University of Wisconsin-Madison, Anthony's core values and discipline learned in the military allowed him to get to where he is today - currently working towards a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering at Northwestern University. Still in the medical field, Anthony is working with nanoparticle therapeutics, trying to save lives from a more technical standpoint.

Now in graduate school pursuing his Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering and working towards a career in academia, Anthony one day aspires to be a professor - allowing him to teach and mentor future scientists both in the classroom and research lab. Anthony's passion for teaching stemmed from when he first became an Army Instructor and was assigned to teach at the Jameson Combat Medic Training Center during his second tour in Iraq. With time Anthony fell in love with teaching and was honored to have been given the opportunity to teach students and convey knowledge that one day could save a life.



WESLEY STINER

U.S. Marine Corps | University of Arizona | Juris Doctor



“AS A LAWYER, MY GOAL IS TO EFFECT CHANGE IN VETERAN REINTEGRATION POLICY THAT WILL PROVIDE FOR IMPROVED SCREENING, EVALUATION, RECOVERY, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY SUICIDE PREVENTION.”

The son of a U.S. Marine, Wesley was raised early on with the motto “America needs warriors.” The aftermath of September 11th made him fully understand why. Though too young to enlist at the time of the attacks, he watched the wars come home as his older brother deployed to Baghdad. Four years later, inspired by his father and brother’s examples, Wesley followed the family call to service and earned his own commission as a Marine.

After deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Wesley became intimately acquainted with the stressors and difficulties faced by service members returning from a combat deployment. This knowledge motivated Wesley and his 1stSgt to develop an anonymous referral system within his unit. The referral system allowed his Marines to identify those struggling with their combat experiences to get help without divulging their identity and condition to the entire unit.

Inspired by the bond and compassion within his unit, Wesley has shifted his focus from combat to the courtroom as an advocate in veterans’ treatment courts. As a lawyer, with intimate knowledge of the challenges PTS presents, he believes he can have greater impact by changing the public’s perception of the men and women returning home. Currently, he serves in the Veterans’ Advocacy Law Clinic at University of Arizona, where he has represented nearly 80 veterans charged with misdemeanors. He is also working to upgrade disability ratings for multiple veterans with PTS and other service related injuries, while drafting appeals to upgrade the discharges of other veterans so they can receive the health care and education benefits they earned. Eventually, he intends to organize a co-op of lawyers in the community to serve as a free resource for veterans in need of discharge upgrades, disability rating upgrades, and disability appeals.



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JOHN “JAE” TERRY

U.S. Navy | Catholic University | Juris Doctor



“THE SKILLS HONED AS A NAVAL OFFICER, COMBINED WITH MY JURIS DOCTOR DEGREE, WILL BE INSTRUMENTAL IN ALLOWING ME TO CONTINUE TO SERVE MY COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY.”

Witnessing his parents' sacrifices as a military family fueled John's (Jae's) desire to pursue a naval career and with a desire to face bigger challenges, lead him into the special warfare community. Never hearing the initial blast that hurled him 30 feet across a dusty road in Afghanistan, changing his life forever, the Naval Officer learned through his experience that it was crucial to build relationships on a keel of trust by listening and taking action in his sailors' lives on and off the battlefield. From multiple deployments to the amputation of his leg. Jae plans to instill that same trust to his community and civilian career. Multiple deployments exposed John to the corruption and violence used to implement local justice and individuals' lack of voice, strength or will to defend themselves, motivating him to be that voice for the oppressed.

Inspired to pursue law school by his grandfather, a retired family court judge, Jae will never know what it was like to grow up in Georgia as an African American before the Civil Rights Movements, keeping his college education a secret. With a desire to emulate his grandfather's devotion to help others, Jae plans to become an advocate or litigator in guiding and shaping our national security policy in the constantly evolving tech field based on his experience serving multiple combat deployments. The skills honed as a Naval Officer – leadership, relationship building, trust, adapting to chaos – combined with his Juris Doctor degree from Catholic University Law School, will be instrumental in allowing Jae to continue to serve his community and country in a new capacity.



MELISSA THOMAS

U.S. Army | Yale University | Doctor of Medicine



“THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR REALISTIC TRAINING, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON I’VE LEARNED IS THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO YOU CAN COUNT ON, THAT YOU CAN PUT YOUR TRUST IN.”

Inspired by her first visit to West Point, Melissa was in awe when she saw a group of cadets playing ultimate frisbee when the cannons sounded for reveille and they all stopped in the middle of their game to salute the flag. That moment got Melissa hooked on the discipline, respect, and honor she craved to be part of, instilling in her a lifetime of service to the nation. Following 9/11, Melissa put her medical school plans on hold so she could deploy with her fellow soldiers - learning leadership skills, along with having opportunities that give her confidence, experience, and perspective today. Throughout her service in the military, including two deployments to Iraq and working as a hospital administrator, Melissa learned to stick to her instincts when making unpopular decisions and that there is no substitute for realistic training, but there are people who you can count on that you put your trust in.

While in the process of applying to medical schools as well as starting the process to transition from active duty Army to the reserves, Melissa suddenly lost her husband in an avalanche in late 2014. Being dual military, Melissa and her husband always seemed to be waiting for the next time they would be living together or for the end of another deployment and as a result were never living in the moment. Melissa’s experiences both in the military and suffering the loss of her husband have made her realize how important relationships are and finding fulfillment in people as opposed to working on the next thing to add to a resume. With aspirations of earning her Medical degree, Melissa is currently undecided on her future specialty, but has her sights set on a lifetime commitment to service either by re-joining the Army, working in the Public Health Service or the VA. While in medical school, Melissa is also volunteering at the VA’s Errera Community Care Center and spearheading a research project with the National Center for PTSD Neuroscience Division in West Haven, CT.



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DEBORAH TRIMBLE

U.S. Air Force | University of Michigan | Doctor of Medicine



“MENTORS IN THE AIR FORCE TAUGHT ME THAT LEADERSHIP IS A MENTALITY, A CHARACTER TRAIT AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY CORRESPOND WITH BEING IN CHARGE. GREAT LEADERS ARE ALWAYS LEADING BY EXAMPLE: FIRST IN AND LAST TO LEAVE, AWARE AND CONCERNED FOR THE WELFARE OF THOSE AROUND THEM.”

Deborah learned the value of service and sacrifice at an early age growing up on a small farm, homeschooled by her parents. She and her siblings joined the military for its tradition of sacrifice, dedication and excellence. Together, they wanted to be part of something greater than themselves. But Deborah never foresaw that a personal tragedy from the Afghan War, which almost claimed the life of her youngest brother, would ultimately push her to separate from the military and answer another call to serve as a doctor.

In the days after her brother's injury, Deborah gathered with family and friends at Brooke Army Medical Center. There, as he fought through intense agony, she witnessed an outpouring of compassion, commitment and sacrifice from his team of surgeons, nurses and caregivers. Inspired by their skill and dedication to save her nineteen-year old brother's life, she made a promise to begin the long journey toward a career in medicine. Now, as a Tillman Scholar at University of Michigan, Deborah is focused on pursuing orthopedic medicine, in large part, due to her brother's lead surgeon at BAMC. While committed to working with veterans and their families, she hopes to someday be able to provide the same honest encouragement that her brother's medical team gave to her family.



DOMINIC VALENTINI

U.S. Navy | Arizona State University | Master of Business Administration



“AFTER THE BLAST, I DISCOVERED IT TAKES COURAGE, DETERMINATION AND FORTITUDE TO PERSEVERE AND EXCEL DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING ODDS OR DETRACTORS.”

After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy, Dominic commissioned in 2010 as a Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Officer and quickly learned that sacrifice is a key component to a life of service. After extensive training, he deployed to Afghanistan where he learned the most important lesson of his life one morning in early January 2013. There, on a routine mission, a mortar landed two meters away from him. Call it luck or divine intervention, he survived the blast and walked away from the experience realizing it takes courage to continue to serve when you've taken a beating and you're not sure you can go out for another round.

In his current position with the Navy, he leads technicians in the rendering safe to transport and destruction of explosive hazards within California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. He often sees people in their most frightened, vulnerable, and directionless times; either there's a bomb in a building, someone found some suspicious white powder, or some other immediate and grave threat to health and happiness. Yet, Dominic feels he is lucky enough to be of service to others, to help restore a sense of normal and calm through his work, and witness the positive effect he can have on their lives.

In addition to the hazards of the job, he is tasked with managing a multi-million dollar budget for the Navy, and in his role he has come to recognize how the detachment operates like a small business. To gain more formal business education, Dominic is now pursuing his MBA from Arizona State University. Eventually, he hopes to leverage his degree to more effectively manage day to day operations that will improve overall his detachment's readiness.



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KARTHIK VENKATRAJ

U.S. Army | University of Colorado - Boulder | Juris Doctor



“I HAVE BEEN IN LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW OUR SOLDIERS ARE NOT ALWAYS PERFECT, BUT I HAVE ALSO BEEN IN LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THEY ARE THE BEST OUR NATION HAS TO OFFER AND THEY DESERVE ONLY THE BEST OUR NATION CAN GIVE.”

The son of Indian immigrants who came to the States with only a hundred dollars to pursue the American dream, Karthik was constantly reminded in his youth that his family's narrative could not have happened anywhere else because of the values that define our nation. Initially, he planned to follow in his parents' footsteps and pursue a career in science. But, as it did for so many, 9/11 changed his life's ambitions. The attacks were a wakeup call to take action. He saw service as a way to honor the American dream, and what the dream represented for his family and the nation. So in 2007, Karthik enlisted in the Army National Guard. Though he was motivated to join the Army to protect and defend our nation's values, when he actually enlisted, the individuals he served with became his passion and reason to serve. He had the unique opportunity to serve with soldiers from small rural towns and inner-city neighborhoods; each and all helped define his service.

Since returning from a tour in Iraq with his National Guard unit, Karthik's focus has shifted to exploring how he can best serve this veteran community as a lawyer. The combination of his legal background and military experience has allowed him to understand the severity of the legal challenges veterans face when they return home, a challenge that the U.S. judicial system has just begun to address with the creation of Veterans Trauma Courts (VTC). Karthik was Managing Editor of the University of Colorado Review, is currently publishing his comment on VTC, which received the 2016 Gamm Justice Award and won the 2016 National Law Review Law Student Writing Competition. Through his Presidency of Military Law Society, clerking for the Colorado Attorney General, and, most recently, as the newly elected President of the Student Bar Association (Student Body President) of CU Law, Karthik is channeling his efforts to build community partnerships that empower returning veterans. After graduation, he hopes to work in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF), supporting the establishment of many more VTCs across the nation.



JAY VINNEDGE

U.S. Air Force | University of Oklahoma | Doctor of Medicine



“THE MILITARY GAVE ME AN UNPRECEDENTED APPRECIATION FOR THE HUMAN CONDITION.”

Despite his fears of aviation, war and other uncertainties, Jay enlisted in the Air Force as an Aeromedical Evacuation Medical Technician. A fourth-generation servicemember, Jay saw three deployments within seven years of service, which taught him the importance of applying gratitude for life, and love for humanity in his everyday practices. Having developed skills in operations planning, prioritization, and mission execution, Jay was prepared for his assignment to Antarctica, where his experience was put to the ultimate test when he and his teammates transformed a small, resource-barren clinic into a four-bed trauma ward in response to a Korean helicopter crash that had occurred 200 miles away.

This incident culminated into an exhausting, but successful 41-hour work day, requiring flexibility, quick-wittedness, and teamwork. It required Jay and his teammates to provide emergency care, critical care, and aerospace medicine skills within the same day, which isn't a common ability in healthcare teams. Jay's first-hand glimpse into the value of dual-certified Emergency and Critical Care military physicians has inspired him to pursue his dream of teaching in a medical school while working in an ER and ICU, as well as serving as a flight physician with the Air National Guard.



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DAN WALTERS

U.S. Army | The University of Alabama | Juris Doctor & Master of Business Administration



“IT’S MY FIRM INTENT TO USE THE OPPORTUNITY OF MY EDUCATION TO GIVE BACK TO MY HOMETOWN OF GREENSBORO.”

Joining the military at the age of 18, Dan learned lessons in Airborne, Air Assault and Ranger school that became impossible to unlearn and that his capacity to endure is limited only by his own will. Before Dan left the Army, one of his assignments was to command an Infantry Basic Training Company teaching new soldiers that “the Army will give back to you everything that you put into it.” Dan has carried his teachings into his civilian life and they have become commandments by which he’s lived his life. Serving five years with the United States Army, Dan’s assignments involved administering the Uniform Code of Military Justice to a unit of over 200 soldiers in addition to advise local Afghanistan figures of justice, ensuring the rule of law. Through these experiences, Dan has seen the power of a justice system correctly applied as well as the results of injustice.

Now a graduate student at The University of Alabama pursuing a Juris Doctor degree and MBA, a husband and father of two young boys, Dan plans to stay in the small Southern town of Greensboro, Alabama, giving him the opportunity to serve those in need. In addition to his law degree, an MBA will allow Dan to help the town by advising new business owners or even start his own business, attracting new population and income to the small town. Whether returning to Greensboro from an Army duty station or deployment, Greensboro has greeted Dan with open arms, inspiring him to use his education opportunities to give back to his hometown.



CODY R. WARD

U.S. Army | Augusta University | M.S., Physician Assistant Studies



“MY GREATEST PERSONAL JOY ASIDE FROM BEING A FATHER IS HELPING PROVIDE A NETWORK OF SUPPORT WHERE OFFICIAL CHANNELS HAVE FALLEN SHORT.”

While his brother was serving as a Ranger in the Army, Cody was a senior at the University of Florida working toward a degree in Elementary Education while competing for a championship on the SEC cycling team with dreams of racing in the Olympics one day. Not being able to stomach the thought of his brother going to war while he rode his bike, Cody joined the Army's Delayed Entry Program on his 24th birthday in 2001. Having deployed in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq three times each with the intense operational tempo coming at a price and humbled by his fellow comrades true selflessness, Cody is resolved to spending his days earning their sacrifice and living up to the example they set - showing him what it meant to love something more than himself. One part of that resolve is Cody's commitment to becoming a Physician Assistant.

Throughout the past seven years Cody has developed a deep love for medicine through serving his local community first as an EMT and then a Paramedic. As a medic Cody is left pondering patient's outcomes whereas PAs provide definitive care and completion of healing. This revelation has driven Cody to pursue a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies at Augusta University with the intent of working as a PA to provide medical care to veterans. With a disconnect between veterans and healthcare providers due to not sharing the same experiences, as both, Cody can bridge that gap and be a uniquely qualified practitioner.



ANDREA WOLFE-CLARK

U.S. Air Force | University of Utah | Ph.D., Clinical Psychology



“MAXIMIZING MISSION SUCCESS AND INCREASING INDIVIDUAL MORALE SHOULD NOT BE CONFLICTING GOALS.”

Andrea has always lived by the leadership mantra, “If I don’t care for my troops, who will?” During her deployment overseas as a behavioral scientist, she was often reminded of the importance of investing in others and breaking down communication barriers. Today, as she pursues her PhD at a civilian university, she sees the communication gap her classmates have when treating service members. For her personally, she is dedicated to not just becoming a clinician, but using her own military experience to understand and connect with active-duty service members in order to help them overcome their struggles.

By interacting her clinical training and military experience, she hopes to provide effective psychotherapy while working with policy makers to create, disseminate, and assess empirically supported training to improve mental health. Informed by her own research and observations, she believes Department of Defense mental health policy can integrate new findings and be improved. Over 1,660 active duty, reserve, and guard members have died by suicide since 2012, making suicide prevention a DoD priority. Despite funding for 900 suicide prevention programs, however, rates continue to rise and suicide is currently the second leading cause of death in the military with more military personnel dying by suicide than combat-related causes.

To develop empirically supported treatment and prevention for suicide, Andrea believes we first have to understand them. Currently, her PhD dissertation aims to understand how risk and protective factors change over time to predict when and for whom suicide risk is high. She wants to serve as a consultant for decision-makers to tailor suicide prevention programs based on research relevant to military members, track the effectiveness of suicide prevention and treatment programs, and modify policies limiting duty for individuals with a history of thoughts of suicide. In her view, maximizing mission success and increasing individual morale should never be conflicting goals.



JONATHAN WOOD

U.S. Air Force | University of Pennsylvania | Doctor of Medicine & Master of Business Administration



“WITHOUT THOSE YEARS IN THE MILITARY I MAY HAVE GONE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL, BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED THE VALUE OF SERVING IN THE HARDEST, MOST DANGEROUS PLACES WHERE NEED IS GREATEST.”

During seven years and four deployments as an Air Force intelligence officer, Jonathan believes he received far more than he gave. The greatest lesson he learned was the importance of purposeful risk-taking, and the paradox that risk-aversion is the surest path to failure. In his post-military life, he has been inspired by the vision of a group of Christian doctors who moved into the poorest, most medically neglected and most “dangerous” neighborhoods of Memphis in an effort to redress the social and racial schisms underlying healthcare disparities. Motivated by their example, Jonathan has made his home in the inner city of Philadelphia, where he is pursuing a dual degree in medicine and business to help lead a nationwide movement of service-minded clinicians back into America’s poorest communities, serving as neighbors.

As a medical student, he has come to realize that while America practices the most advanced medicine in the world, it is not adequately delivered to poor rural and inner city communities. Two often-cited reasons for these healthcare disparities are that physicians are generally unwilling to live in poor communities for low-paying primary care jobs; and that structural problems in our healthcare system do not make it fiscally possible to operate first-rate clinics among the poor. By pursuing his MBA as a Tillman Scholar, he wants to challenge these responses and shape smarter strategies for delivering high-quality medicine in low-resource environments, where crime and poverty have deterred others.