

Scholarship Helps Vets Succeed

SportClips and VFW offer award to fill gaps left by GI Bill benefits

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David Conway grew up hearing sea stories from his grandfathers, both of whom were Navy sailors during WWII. Those childhood stories solidified his desire to one day serve.

In 2010, Conway joined the Coast Guard. He said the “highlight” of his time was his deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. For 10 months, he patrolled the entrance to the bay and maintained a security



perimeter.

“We were the first line of defense on the water,” he said. “And as a crewman, I stood security watches manning the 50-caliber machine gun on our small boats.”

Today, Conway is enrolled at California Maritime Academy, where he is working toward his bachelor’s degree in Marine Transportation.

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He also is going to earn a minor in law, as well as his third-mate license.

“The third-mate license is the most valuable part of Cal Maritime’s program,” he said. “I can use it to work on unlimited tonnage ships like tankers and container ships.”

Conway said the cost of the school exceeds his GI Bill benefits. Additionally, the program is year round and requires going to sea each summer for training.

He heard about VFW’s [*Help A Hero Scholarship*](#) from a friend and previous scholarship recipient. He applied and was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship this year.

“Receiving this scholarship has given me the opportunity to focus on my studies without added financial stress,” he said.

After Conway graduates, he hopes to pursue a trash-solution idea he developed in the past year. He has submitted a patent application and hopes to start a company to expand on the machine he has built.

He said if things don’t go as planned, he will work on ships.

He added that because of the *Help A Hero Scholarship*, he has been able to focus on his studies, which earned him spots on his school’s Dean’s and President’s lists.

“I cannot thank VFW enough for its generosity and giving me this opportunity,” he said.

Sponsored by SportClips, the *Help A Hero Scholarship* is now in its third year. Some \$2.4 million in scholarships have been awarded since 2013.

By [Janie Dyhouse](#), associate editor, *VFW* magazine

Photo caption: David Conway with his wife, Jessie, is the recipient of a \$5,000 Help A Hero Scholarship. He is in his first year at the California Maritime Academy, where he is planning to get his bachelor's degree in Marine Transportation.