

Veteran Gets Help So He Can Give Help

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Javier Galvan signed up for the United States Marine Corps in 2006 at age 17, right out of high school. He didn't have plans for his future and felt the military offered a way to have a career and do something with his life. He also thought it might be a way to validate his American citizenship.

"I was born in the U.S., I'm from California, but I felt like society didn't welcome me because of my Mexican heritage," said Galvan. "I wanted to feel like a real American."

Galvan served his country for four years, deploying to Iraq in 2008 and Afghanistan in 2009. He enlisted with the idea of having a military career, but his experiences in the Marines gave him the desire to do other things. The Post-9/11 GI Bill helped him see he had an opportunity to go to school.

"I started college within weeks of leaving the military," Galvan said. "The Marines do not really have their own medical personnel, but seeing the work done by our Navy corpsmen and combat lifesaver training made me realize I wanted to be a doctor."

After finishing a bachelor's degree, the difficult financial realities of medical school began to sink in for Galvan. He wanted to be a doctor to give back and provide a meaningful service to others, but the cost of education could force him to abandon that dream.

"Most people accumulate a lot of debt for med school, then need a job that will pay extremely well so they can pay the debt," said Galvan. "My first year of med school I was cutting back on basic needs like food just to put more money toward school, but I knew that wasn't sustainable. I began looking for scholarships so I could graduate with as little debt as possible and do what I wanted, not just what would pay the bills."

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Galvan's search led him to the VFW's "[Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship](#)." He is immensely grateful for the support he received and the pressure it has removed as he finishes medical school and pursues a master's in public health. Now free to choose his own path, his goal is to become a pediatric radiologist so he can help children who have been abused and give them a brighter future.

"This scholarship has been a lifesaver. It has been so helpful toward minimizing the debt I have to deal with for school and living expenses," said Galvan. "I can focus on my education and what I really want to do without worrying about how much debt is hanging over me. Receiving this scholarship means the world to me."

Galvan believes veterans are well-equipped for making a difference after separating from the military and he encourages other veterans to get a college education. He also advises planning ahead so that big goals are easier to reach.

"The GI Bill won't cover everything, especially if you need advanced degrees. If I'd known at the beginning what I do now, I would've saved my GI Bill money for med school which is more expensive than my undergraduate degree," Galvan said. "It is worth it though. We learn a lot of good traits and skills in the military. If you take those and apply them to school, they will pay off."