



# Help A Hero Recipient Credits the VFW for His Law School Success

**Before Ed Tjaden joined the Army in 2007, he knew he wanted to be a lawyer but school wasn't motivating him so he began seven years in the military**

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Today, the father of three is preparing to graduate with a law degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., a feat, he said, that wouldn't have happened without the VFW.

In 2008, Tjaden deployed to Iraq with the 2nd Bde., 1st Armd. Div., for 15 months. As a close air support coordinator, Tjaden spent time at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Camp Liberty and Camp Stryker.

While deployed, Tjaden said he had trouble with his ankles, constantly rolling them. He would wrap his ankles and move on. It wasn't until he returned stateside that he learned he should have had doctors examine and properly care for his ankles long before.

He had surgeries on both ankles at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. During the process, nerves in his legs were damaged, and he could no longer walk. When he was medically retired in 2014, he was told a wheelchair would be his new way of life.

Undeterred, he contacted his alma mater, Eastern Illinois University (EIU) in Charleston, Ill., to enroll and start his life anew.

While in college, he spent a lot of time in therapy. He worked his way from the wheelchair to using a cane to walk. These days, he rarely uses the cane.

After graduating from EIU in 2015, Tjaden applied for law school at Washington University in St. Louis. With three boys to raise, Tjaden and his wife, Ginny, knew it would be a struggle. They lived in an area where they didn't feel comfortable raising their boys, but it

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was affordable.

Then Tjaden heard about VFW's Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship. He applied and was granted assistance.

"That scholarship changed the trajectory of my law school experience," he said. "We were able to move to St. Peters (Mo.). The schools are better, and my sons are thriving."

Tjaden has been a Help a Hero recipient for four semesters. At school, he is in the top 10 percent of his class.

"If it weren't for you guys, we wouldn't be where we are," he said. "I just can't say enough good things. VFW transformed my law school experience."

Incidentally, Tjaden was one of nine VFW-Student Veterans of America fellows selected to attend the VFW's annual legislative conference last month.

Now in its fifth year, the VFW's "Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship" has awarded more than \$4.1 million to 943 military and student veterans. The scholarship provides service members and veterans up to \$5,000 in post-secondary scholarships. Scholarship applications are being accepted through April 30 for the 2018 fall semester. [Apply today](#).

*This article is featured in the March/April 2018 issue of [Checkpoint](#) and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of Ed Tjaden.*