

Veteran Takes Big Steps With VFW Scholarship

'Now that my GI Bill is ending, this scholarship helps cover some of my courses ... it makes a huge difference and takes some of the financial burdens off of my family'

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Casey Kennedy began dreaming of a military career when she was a child. In fact, she still has a piece of paper from grade school outlining her plans to join the Navy. Kennedy ended up committing to the Nebraska Army National Guard and served for five years. Within the National Guard, Kennedy chose to honor her late great grandfather's legacy and protect fellow service members as a member of the military police force.

Remaining unscathed through a deployment to Bagram, Afghanistan, Kennedy was back home for six months when she was hit head-on by a drunk driver.

"My service was unfortunately cut short from the accident, the majority of my bones from my pelvis down were broken," she recalled.

But 27-year-old Kennedy has achieved so much since that terrible event through her GI Bill and the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship." Currently working on her master's in Human Services, Kennedy sees this as a mere stepping stone to getting her doctorate and giving back to her community in a big way.

Kennedy is grateful to the people who make the scholarship possible and feels she could not achieve her goals and provide for her family without the assistance. She and her husband Nicholas have three girls; Taylor (8), Raelynn (3) and Harper (2).

"Before starting my master's degree, I had not taken out any student loans. Now that my GI Bill is ending, this scholarship helps cover some of my courses. It makes a huge difference and takes some of the financial burdens off of my family," she said.

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Kennedy has faced her share of obstacles but continually puts one foot in front of the other, and she encourages other veterans to do the same.

“Just take each class one step at a time. It can be intimidating to look at a degree program and the costs, but it is possible and very doable. Nothing compares to the feeling of finally receiving your degree and knowing how hard you worked to earn it,” she advised.

Kennedy is a valiant example for so many who have their sights set on higher education, and her work will impact many ... including three little girls who could go even farther witnessing such a tenacious, hardworking parent.