

Students Are Veteran's 'Biggest Success Story'

After a decorated Army career, Jeffrey Gaylord is #StillServing today to guide and inspire young men and women

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After a decorated Army career, Jeffrey Gaylord is #StillServing today to guide and inspire young men and women just as others did for him nearly 40 years ago.

As a student at the University of Virginia in 1982, Gaylord was invited to join the school's ROTC program. Both his father and brother served in the military. He chose to follow suit and join.

"It was a combination of family tradition and fate," friend and veteran Dave Rogers said.

Gaylord went on to serve in the Army for over 30 years. During that time, he successfully completed a breadth of assignments taking him from, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan to the Pentagon. As he neared retirement, a two-star general who had become a friend and mentor asked Gaylord what he planned to do next and suggested he become a JRTOC instructor. Things moved quickly from there.

"By the next morning, the general had already made phone calls," Rogers said. "The ball was moving."

After completing training, Gaylord began his first tenure as a JROTC instructor at a high school in Clarksville, Tennessee. In 2020, he transferred to Blackman High School in Murfreesboro, where he is #StillServing his students and veteran community.

A member of VFW Post 12206, Gaylord has been known to bring fellow members into the classroom to share VFW lessons and values with the next generation of military leaders.

Known as "COLONEL" to his students, Gaylord also helps lead the school's Blaze Battalion

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cadets. In JROTC district and national competitions, their marksmanship, raiders, and drill teams have won several awards. In addition to being fierce competitors, the cadets maintain high-grade point averages and are well-rounded young adults, Rogers said.

Throughout his military career, Gaylord earned many accolades. As an instructor, he feels a new sense of accomplishment.

“My rewarding days are those spent teaching my students to be future leaders and having the opportunity to watch them evolve from freshmen to their graduation,” Gaylord said.

“That is my biggest success story.”

In the 2022-2023 school year, Gaylord won VFW Teacher of the Year for the state of Tennessee in recognition of his work and service.