

‘Thank You Doesn’t Seem Like Enough’

If veterans have doubts about school, Marine Corps veteran Dustin Alley encourages them to do it anyway

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Marine Corps veteran Dustin Alley, 36, lives in Bristol, Connecticut, with his wife, Sarah, and their three children, Evan, Ethan and Katelyn. He was stationed in Beaufort, South Carolina, and Yuma, Arizona. Later, Alley deployed to Afghanistan as an air traffic controller. He served in the military for nine years and left as a sergeant.

Alley was in eighth grade when 9/11 occurred, which influenced his decision to enlist.

“My teacher, who was a Vietnam veteran, said, ‘This is an act of war.’ That day impacted my life,” Alley said. “Right before my junior year of high school, I decided to join the military. I loved the opportunity to serve.”

Alley heard about the VFW’s “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship” while getting a haircut. He is grateful for the financial support.

“Thank you doesn’t seem like enough,” Alley said.

He explained that he did not graduate from high school with the highest grades. Academics were not a priority since Alley knew he was going to serve. But once Alley was in the military, his corporal challenged him to go to college.

Alley earned a bachelor’s degree in professional aeronautics, with a minor in management, and a master’s degree in education and biblical studies. He is now working toward his doctorate in leadership.

“I never saw my life going to where it is today. I have immense gratitude and appreciation,” he said.

After graduation, Alley plans to lead in his church’s ministry. He wants to install a

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leadership framework for other ministries to use and be a traveling speaker. Currently, Alley has an online social network and podcast called “Men After God.”

“The doctorate will give me credibility to speak about a subject close to my heart,” he said.

If veterans have doubts about school, Alley encourages them to do it anyway. He says he took advantage of opportunities and used what he learned in the Marines to succeed.

“Anyone in the military understands what it means to work hard,” he said. “I still achieved my childhood dreams even though I failed classes in high school.”

Alley says the scholarship lifted a significant financial burden. He credits his accomplishments to his faith and is thankful for the supportive people around him.

“Life shouldn’t be done alone. Family and friends help you achieve a lot,” Alley said. “I give God glory for who I am and where I am. I’m looking forward to taking that message out into the world. This scholarship helps make that possible.”

[Learn more about the VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship."](#)