Selfless sacrifice

American soldiers continue to fight for freedom

DOLLY ELLIOTT-HAMES-HUBBARD
Guest Writer

For over 200 years, the United States has set the standard for living the precious gift of life. From the pleas of the Statue of Liberty, to the calls of western destiny, the very heart of North America has cried passionately for free will and liberty. These qualities spark fire in many souls. Every great thing imaginable is offered on these blessed shores. Here, a person has the potential to become their best self, anything they choose to be.

Many Americans have taken up the demanding vocation of a soldier as an act of thanks for the life they have been offered through their citizenship. As a protector and a warrior, the soldier must uphold mental, physical, and professional readiness and posture 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A soldier must never do anything for personal profit, benefit or pleasure that will disgrace the uniform. A soldier must remain on watch as a purveyor of the principles of peace, ready to address conflict as a resolute line of resistance to any challenge against America. These deeply dedicated lives are offered up passionately to defend the potential of each American life. Hence, "Freedom isn't Free."

Ryan Griffith
Writer

Starting college is an intimidating experience for nearly everyone. One of the biggest fears among incoming students may be that they might not find a place where they fit in.

At Veterans of Baylor, a student organization dedicated to advocating for veterans' issues on campus, students who served in the armed forces can find a welcoming community.

"I've met some of my best friends in Veterans of Baylor," organization president, Mandy Hinshaw, a junior, said. "I feel like it's kind of a way to keep that family that you've been with for so long."

Hinshaw is studying elementary education. Before she began her journey to become a teacher, she served as an E-5 sergeant in the U.S. Army.

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In 2013, when troops were scaling out of Iraq and Fort Hood, the central Texas area began to experience an influx of veterans’ issues. The Veterans Service Office was backlogged on claims, there were more homeless veterans, and the local mental health authority saw an increased need for psychological services. Because of this, various organizations recognized the need to unite and create an organization focused solely on veterans, resulting in the Heart of Texas Veterans One Stop.

The mission behind the organization is for veterans to have all their needs met in one stop. In the past year, we have quadrupled our space at our new facility on La Salle and the number of veterans and family members that we help.

The Veterans One Stop meets the veterans where they are—homeless, students, parents; old or young. If they need help with claims, they can visit the veterans service officer. If they need a job, they can work with the employment specialist to develop a civilian resume. If they need legal help, we partner with Baylor Law School and Lone Star Legal Aid to provide free legal services. We have a licensed therapist and two retired psychologists that lead groups for post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Beyond advocacy services, we want the Veterans One Stop to be a comfortable place. We have a chapel, an arts and crafts room, a TV media room, and fresh cupcakes Monday mornings. The Veterans One Stop should be a safe place for a veteran to get anything that they need.

Here at the Veterans One Stop we like to say, ‘thank you for your service, but we still need you.’ After leaving the military, a veteran can feel as though they have lost their mission, but we want to remind veterans that there is still plenty of work to be done.

Many times people put their lives on hold to go into the military, so it is wonderful that veterans can go back to school and figure out their next mission. As a Baylor alumna myself, and due to the close proximity to the university, I desire to foster the strong ties we have with the veterans of Baylor. Maybe their first mission was as a soldier, sailor or airman, but their next mission may be as a banker, marketer or physician. It is certainly not a single person doing this work at the Veterans One Stop and it can not be one person who goes out to improve lives all over the country. We need everyone to continue on this mission to stand behind those who stood up for us.

DeLisa Russell proudly serves as the director of the Heart of Texas Veterans One Stop.

Members of the Baylor Student Senate have been working to implement policies in favor of Baylor veterans. Sophomore Elizabeth Larson and sophomore Reed Glass met with Kevin Davis, Baylor’s veterans program manager, and sophomore Alex Loya, the vice president of Veterans of Baylor, to discuss the ongoing work.

“We are working on a series of bills that … we think will give veterans a voice from a different perspective,” Larson said. “The student body will be their mouth piece.”

Previously, a committee turned down priority registration, which the veterans now seek again, for the approximately 160 veterans on Baylor’s campus.

“The opposition that we face isn’t coming from a place of ‘we don’t want to support our veterans,’” Davis said. “I think it maybe comes from … a lack of understanding of, really, the unique challenges these guys face.”

Another bill focuses on discounted parking. Veterans who have suffered a service connected disability are granted free parking, but this accommodation would also aid commuting veterans.

The final of the three bills is aimed to help alleviate financial burdens through a book stipend. Larson has found that other Big 12 schools work to ease burdens for veterans in this way.

Former Representative Chet Edwards spoke with the student veterans recently and discussed the difficulties that veterans encounter.

“One [veteran] in particular, last year, thought his calling in life was to be a teacher, but he just found out he didn’t have the personality,” Edwards said. “He’s having to switch majors and now he may not finish his school before he runs out of GI benefits.”

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Veterans salute the American soldier

In 1954, President Eisenhower signed legislation to change the name from Armistice Day to Veterans Day. He did this to broaden the scope of celebration and respect for those who had served, sacrificed, and survived World War II, and the Korean conflict of the time. The intent was for Veterans Day to honor the sacrifice of both the dead and the living. At the dedication of a memorial building, Eisenhower said: “… it is well for us to pause, to acknowledge our debt to those who paid so large a share of freedom’s price.”

More recently, in 2001, President George W. Bush signed United States Resolution 143 into law to set aside the week of Nov. 11 through 17 as National Veterans Awareness Week. This was in support of educating elementary and secondary school students about the contributions and sacrifices of America’s veterans.

While my son was deployed in Iraq during 2004, I wrote a poem in honor of the veterans who had gone before us in our family, an endless line that spans over America’s history since 1746. As I wrote in my poem Rally ‘Round Tha’ Soldier:

“God bless America’s people, and God bless those who keep them free, for without America’s Soldiers … America wouldn’t be.”

I stand by that sentiment every day that I am afforded the opportunity to speak, think, feel, write and live my life. There are many powers at work in the American way, but the one I am most certain of is the American soldiers who continue to blaze freedom’s trail.

Dolly Elliott-Hames-Hubbard served in the U.S. Army for 11 years in various capacities and worked with the American Red Cross. Upon graduating, she hopes to use her environmental science degree to expand educational opportunities across the country.

“God bless America’s people, and God bless those who keep them free, for without America’s Soldiers … America wouldn’t be.”

Students build lasting ties through Veterans of Baylor

Veterans of Baylor seeks to create a sense of camaraderie for veterans, similar to the strong ties felt by those in service.

“Being in the military, you always are friends with people,” Hinshaw said. “Like, I could go to Colorado and I would have someone to stay with…you just kind of stay connected, even if you don’t talk.”

Baylor engages with student veterans through the Veteran Educational and Transition Services (VETS) program, which seeks to help ensure the academic success and smooth transition of veterans, but the student-led Veterans of Baylor serves a different purpose.

Hinshaw believes that advocating for student veterans, who often do not fit the stereotypical undergraduate image, is an important function of Veterans of Baylor.

“We have veterans who have kids, we have veterans who have lost limbs due to war; they’re bringing a lot of emotional, physical boundaries … to school,” Hinshaw said. “But they’re also bringing a lot of wisdom and a lot of different personalities, and they have a lot to offer Baylor.”

Retired Sergeant Dolly Elliott-Hames-Hubbard, a senior, said she is proud to be a member of Veterans of Baylor.

“It has given me hope and it has made my life easier,” Elliott-Hames-Hubbard said.
Members honor role models

In light of the annual coin ceremony, veterans weigh in on effective leaders

LIESJE POWERS AND JADE MOFFETT
Editor, Writer

Each year, veterans at Baylor join in a tradition dating back to World War II by passing along a coin to someone significant to them at Baylor. The coin was originally a unique marker for each soldier to carry so that he could be returned to his platoon if he were to become lost during times of war.

Known today as the Challenge Coin, veterans annually present it to those who have helped them during their journey, whether it be transition to life after serving or to begin working toward a new career. Some recipients are faculty or staff, while others are close relatives who have been role models to those who have served.

At the Veterans of Baylor meeting following the ceremony, veterans had a chance to discuss who has made a difference for veterans throughout history, as well as leaders who continue to advocate for them in the present. The advocacy of the past has created opportunity and prosperity in the lives of military members that continues to this day.

Nathan Hale, a graduate student and Army veteran, named President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the most influential leader because he passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act. This became the GI Bill, which pays for veteran education post-service. Because of this one piece of legislation, veterans have been able to afford and enjoy a Baylor education for many years.

“I’m still serving in the National Guard,” Hale said. “So the policy that has helped me the most has been the GI Bill.”

Several veterans agreed that a priority for leaders today should be the state of the veteran healthcare system. Sophomore Alex Loya, who served in the Marine Corps, thinks the government should “cut down on the bureaucracy slowing down VA healthcare.” Hale also remarked that “quicker and easier access to healthcare” would improve veterans’ lives.

Christopher Strange, a junior political science major who served in the Air Force, felt that the general public is held most responsible for change in the lives of veterans, and is thankful for their commitment.

“The American public, holding their congressmen, senators or president accountable to the needs of veterans, [has] done the most,” Strange said.