Kicking butt and taking names
Harrington fights his battle with cancer while attending school

By: Taylor Ward

Thirty-five-year-old sophomore, Nick Harrington started his first year at Baylor this year and is studying communication sciences and disorders but before becoming a full-time student, Harrington had served in the United States Army for seven years.

“The original plan was just to stay in long enough to get the college benefits and I ended up really liking it, so I stayed in,” Harrington said.

While serving in the Army, Harrington completed two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan.

“I went in the initial wave in 2003 when we invaded Iraq,” Harrington said. “I was there the first time for eight months and then I went back and I was there for a year and then, Afghanistan, I was there for only seven months.”

Harrington was injured during one of his tours and it left him 80 percent disabled when he was discharged from the military.

“I was riding in a Humvee that got hit by a roadside bomb,” Harrington said. “When I got thrown, I took a lot of shrapnel to the left side of my body and my left shoulder was separated pretty bad. It somehow managed to destroy my right knee entirely. I’ve had a couple of reconstructive surgeries on my right knee and left shoulder as well. I kind of recovered from that and then found out I had cancer.”

Diagnosed with thyroid cancer in June of 2016, Harrington explained that it had spread into his neck and down into his lungs. For some time, he was unsure about whether he wanted to enroll as a full-time student, but fellow military veteran Mandy Hinshaw commended his efforts kindly.

“He’s exceptional,” Hinshaw said. “I don’t know that I could handle it as well as he does. He’s so focused and ambitious. It’s inspiring to watch him take on school and his treatments. He’s a champion.”

While keeping up with his treatments, Harrington also handles the schedule of a full-time student.

“Nick is an exceptional student, both academically and personally,” the Baylor Veterans Coordinator Jessica Alford said.

Harrington must set up appointments with his doctor to make sure that he is as healthy as possible.

“I just recently had a successful treatment down in Houston and the radiation seemed to take,” Harrington said. “Not completely out of the woods yet, but I took a huge step in the right direction.”

Harrington has always adopted a positive attitude in live, ever since he was a young boy.

“I can attribute a lot of it to the military,” Harrington said. “But even as a kid I went through a lot. I lost my dad when I was young. Growing up was kind of rough sometimes. I think it was instilled in me early on and the military just brought it out more in me.”

Harrington uses his determination in his studies as well, aiming to earn a degree in speech pathology and audiology so that he can work in the health care department of his choosing when he graduates.

“My original plan was to be a teacher when I got out of the military,” Harrington said.

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Caring for those who served

Baylor’s Veteran’s Affairs Coordinator Jessica Alford discusses how important it is to help those who have sacrificed for others

By Sarah Barrientos

It should come as no surprise to anyone that Jessica Alford loves her job. Alford currently works as Baylor University’s Veterans Coordinator.

“Jessica has been awesome, as far as like, well, everything,” current Baylor Student and former member of the United States Army veteran Nick Harrington said. “It’s been seamless for me.”

Coming from a family of veterans, Alford herself has never served, but she firmly believes that serving those who served is just as important. Alford has personal experience, with her father, grandfather, and three of her cousins all having served in different branches of the United States military.

The military service in her family may not stop with her previous generations either. Alford also has a four-year-old son who wants to one day become a fighter pilot.

Alford continues to feel satisfied working with veterans and their families at Baylor, and her passion for helping those who served does not stop when she clocks out. She helps with clubs, events, and organizations that support and honor veterans on campus as well.

During Premiere, an all-day event hosted by Baylor University during the spring, Alford, a Baylor alumna herself, volunteers to speak with potential students and their families, along with veterans and their dependents who are thinking about going to school, about the various programs that assist veterans and their children with the transition to college. Alford also does her best to inform these potential students about veterans clubs and events they can partake in.

When it comes time to register for classes, Alford’s plate gets very full.

“I do not leave my office at all,” Alford said. “It is so busy!”

This may become easier in the future however, thanks to lobbying efforts by Alford and severa others involved. Veterans on campus will now have what is called “priority-registration status,” meaning that veterans will get access to register for classes at an earlier time than regular students.

While it was never her plan to work for veterans, Alford said that serving had always been a value that was ingrained in her by her family.

One of Alford’s previous jobs was volunteering with low-income families at an after-school program in north Waco. It wasn’t until Alford’s mother suggested a job opening at Baylor that she had considering working with Veterans.

“It’s not a job when you’re doing what you love,” Alford said.

SALUTE Honors Vets

Veterans of Baylor’s honor society tips its hat to academic achievement

By Lauren Jordan

Last year, 29 veterans within the Baylor community were inducted into the SALUTE Honor Society. SALUTE is the first honor society created for United States student veterans and military personnel. It can be found at two-year and four-year universities and colleges across the nation.

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Making veterans a first priority

Baylor faculty helps veterans receive priority registration so that they have less to worry about and get the benefits they deserve

By Erin Mobley

Every semester students undergo the stress of registering for the next round of classes and making sure they get the sections and professors they want.

Registration times vary based on hours, classification, and programs such as Honors or athletics. Baylor recently granted student veterans priority registration.

Mandy Hinshaw, a junior, is the president of Veteran Educational and Transition Services (VETS). She listed getting priority registration which allows veterans to register for classes before the general student population as one of her major accomplishments during her time as president.

“Baylor has a high reputation for academics and success,” Hinshaw said. “Coming out of the military, it can be intimidating.”

When receiving medical care, veterans have limited times and opportunities to make appointments.

These appointments must be made very far in advance and veterans are penalized if they have to cancel or reschedule their appointments.

This becomes a real problem when the student veteran do not know their class schedules. It makes them unable to schedule appointments as necessary and can become hazardous to their overall health. With priority registration, student veterans would have the ability to plan ahead.

“Once you’ve met a veteran, you’ve met one veteran,” said Kevin Davis, the VETS program director in reference to the wide variety of unique individuals that make up the student veteran population.

The veteran population at Baylor is made up of about 150 students as of fall of 2016.

“One-third of our veterans have families or work,” Vice President of VETS Alex Loya said. “It will be very beneficial to them.”

This accomplishment for veterans at Baylor will hopefully set precedents for other universities to do the same for their student veteran populations.

“Vets who go here and vets who graduate from here have a sense of pride,” said Hinshaw.
The woman behind the legacy

How Dr. Janet Bagby created the VETS program and helped it to succeed fully at Baylor

By Lauren Jordan

Dr. Janet Bagby is a senior lecturer in Educational Psychology and is the founder of Veteran Educational and Transition Services (VETS). The inspiration for the program was initially introduced six years ago in 2011 and the VETS program was brought to life only two years later in 2013.

Bagby was motivated to create VETS after she realized how many military veterans decided to come back to school after the Post-9/11 GI Bill was passed in 2009.

The GI Bill gives active-duty military and veterans with 90 or more days of service on, or after, Sept. 11, 2001, increased educational benefits that help cover expenses, provide a living allowance, some money for books and the ability to transfer unused benefits to their dependents that include their spouses or children.

After interviewing and spending time with several of Baylor’s veteran students, Bagby decided that the school needed to develop a stronger support system for them.

The purpose behind the creation of VETS was to provide support services for veterans who returned to school.

Bagby worked with several other people, including the Veterans Affairs Coordinator Jessica Alford, to ensure that the veterans received the assistance they needed and deserved.

“It’s fun working with Dr. Bagby,” Alford said. “We have the same goal and appreciation for our veterans.”

In the past four years under Bagby’s leadership, VETS gained support from all over campus and increased their resources. Their spike in productivity made it necessary for VETS to hire a full-time program manager and more than 40 people were interviewed before Kevin Davis was offered the position.

“Dr. Bagby is the reason why I’m here,” Davis said. “Her energy and passion for vets is awesome.”

“Dr. Bagby is the reason why I’m here, her energy and passion for vets is awesome.”
- Kevin Davis

Nick Harrington, an army veteran who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer last June, praised Dr. Bagby’s interactions with him as above and beyond the call of duty.

“I emailed her, and she was out of town or something and she actually gave me a phone call,” Harrington said. “She was on her vacation and she called me on her personal time just to talk to me and let me know what was going on and about the program and stuff. Whatever I needed, they were there.”

While Bagby may be moving on from VETS, her successes and triumphs while leading the program will have a lasting impact.

“I’ve never been prouder,” Bagby said.

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“I’ve always kind of swung back and forth between being a teacher and something in health care – speech pathology and audiology is kind of a combination of both.”

While his resolve is strong, Harrington divulged that he sometimes struggles with knowledge that he is battling this disease, but he perseveres nonetheless.

“Sometimes you just want to give up,” Harrington said. “But you really can’t. You just have to keep going. If you give up, there are really no options. When you hit rock bottom, the only way to go is up.”
Flying from the airstrip, landing in the classroom

Strange discusses how VETS has helped his transition into school

By Jade Moffett

Air Force veteran Christopher Strange gets ready for his upcoming graduation in May of 2017. He will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science

As Christopher Strange prepares to graduate, he recalled his transition from the United States Air Force to the campus,

“[It’s] given me a social doorway,” Strange said. “It gave me people I could relate to.”

All of Baylor's professors and students have also been very accepting and helpful during his time here, helping him in any way they could.

Strange says his time in the Air Force prepared him for the classroom. While in the service he was an Aircraft Arms and Systems Specialist.

His job included being a technician for the aircraft's weapons systems, loading bombs and fixing any electrical issues they had. What he learned from that was discipline and respect for his courses and respect for the faculty and the students around him.

He used these skills in his transition off the plane and into the classroom.

“The fact that you be where you say you’re going to be, do what you say you’re going to do, that's probably 50 percent of life,” Strange said. “Getting up for 8 a.m. classes is very easy when you’ve had revelry at 6 a.m."

As his graduation date approaches and he begins his transition out of Baylor, he gave a few tips to other veterans thinking about going back to school.

“Use the programs here that are available,” Strange said. “There are so many good things that happen here that just don't get taken advantage of.”

Graduation will be just another transition. He is anxious but excited to step out into his next mission.

This summer Strange plans on finding a job that allows him to pursue his passion for helping others.

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