

'I Wanted to Give Back'

Help A Hero Scholarship helps VFW Legacy Life member with tuition

Sep 14, 2022

The VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" has afforded a former Army Ranger the opportunity to attend University of Minnesota full time.

Jeremy VanLaningham began the three-year, full-time nurse anesthesia program at Minnesota University in 2020. The Iraq and Afghanistan War veteran said he is on track to finish the program on Aug. 31, 2023.

The demanding program does not allow for VanLaningham to work. And, since he has a wife and two children, he said he needs all the help he can get.

"Without the VFW's scholarship program, I could not be able to attend this program," VanLaningham said. "It is incredibly expensive, and I have already exhausted all of my GI Bill benefits from previous schooling."

The former Army Ranger learned about the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" from scouring the internet for military-related scholarships. He eventually found [vfw.org/Scholarship](https://www.vfw.org/Scholarship), where he learned about Help A Hero. VanLaningham said it was an easy process to apply for a VFW scholarship.

"It was an incredible relief to find this scholarship," VanLaningham said. "Each semester is a struggle, and the scholarship just makes it easier on me and my family."

VanLaningham served on active duty from 1998 to 2002. He deployed to Afghanistan with 3rd Ranger Bn., 75th Ranger Regt., from 2001 to 2002. VanLaningham then joined the Army Reserve, where he served from 2003 to 2005.

In 2006, VanLaningham was activated into full-time service and deployed to Iraq with 558th Signal Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Maineville, Ohio. He was discharged from the Army in 2008.

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Because of VFW's help with his tuition, VanLaningham said he became a Gold Legacy Life member of VFW Post 4452 in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

"I wanted to give back," VanLaningham said. "I want to return the favor since VFW is affording me this opportunity."

Sponsored by the hair care franchise [Sport Clips](#), the Help A Hero Scholarship is now in its eighth year. Individual recipients receive up to \$5,000 through the scholarship program.

As VFW's official haircutter, Sport Clips began working with VFW in 2005 to raise funds for a former program called Operation Uplink. In 2013, Sport Clips became the primary supporter of VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship."