

# SERVICE TO SKYHAWK

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN OFFICE OF VETERAN SERVICES

SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

UT MARTIN

## STUDENT NEWS

The year 2019 has proven to be the highlight year for the Skyhawk Veterans Association as they established a group of leaders and elected to take their organization out into the community. On 8 November 2019, SVA leaders and members visited the Humboldt Veterans Home in what we hope will become an annual Veterans Day celebration. These students took time to recognize those members for their service to their country and spent time talking about past, present and future service.



In other Veterans Day news, the veteran services coordinator attended an event at Sharon Elementary as the guest speaker. He brought a team from the records office and the university mascot, Captain Skyhawk, to facilitate a pep rally atmosphere among those in attendance. Elementary students paid homage and learned about flags from each military branch, the state of Tennessee and the USA. During this event, the students of Sharon schools presented poems to all the veterans in attendance, and those poems will be shared in future newsletters as symbols of a younger generation taking time to articulate their understanding of the sacrifices made by those who have served our country. A special thanks to Mrs. Danielle Van Cleave of Sharon Elementary for organizing such an event to honor veterans.



## A Soldier's Call

The call to serve  
 You rose above the rest  
 Though you knew the risk  
 You overcame it to the letters U.S. on your chest

In times of peace  
 In times of war  
 We can count on you  
 With a million words we couldn't thank you in the least  
 For bravery deserves to be praised on hands and knees

As the marines say "The Few, The Proud"  
 And the Army say "Army Strong"  
 Your strength, courage, and valor  
 Enough praise and gifts cannot be showered  
 "Forged by the sea"  
 The valiant Navy  
 "Born ready"  
 The fortifying coast guard  
 "Aim High, Fly, Fight, Win"  
 The swift Air Force  
 During our nation's anthem  
 We stand for you and your fallen brethren  
 And to those you may never step on the soil, we salute  
 you for your life, your service, and your dedication

Sweat, the blood shed, and a mother's tears  
 The privates, the recruits, the majors, the lieutenants, the  
 medics, the families  
 No other love can compare except from heaven above  
 Thank you for your life  
 Thank you for your bravery  
 Thank you for your service  
 You bled so babies could crawl  
 You served so the public wouldn't need  
 But very few may ever heed  
 A soldier's call

By Evan Street



The Skyhawks Veterans Association began the fall 2019 semester with meetings held every other Thursday at 12:15 p.m. in the Veterans Lounge, located in Gooch Hall. Led by the president, Richard “Trey” Hargis, with direction by faculty advisers, these students developed specific plans to expand the organization through community outreach and various introductory events on campus for the spring semester. This is a student-led group and open to anyone who wants to make veterans’ causes a staple of their time here on campus. For more information, visit the Skyhawk Veterans Association Facebook page or email Richard Hargis at [richharg@ut.martin.edu](mailto:richharg@ut.martin.edu). The first spring semester meeting was held 16 January 2020 at 12:15 p.m. in the Veterans Lounge in Gooch Hall. Additional meetings will be held every two weeks following that date.



One of the most rewarding parts of this profession is being witness to students reaching their ultimate goal of walking across the stage. This is a great achievement for all students, especially those that made the personal decision to complete an education following service to their country. It proves they were able to successfully transition from “Service to Skyhawk” and now graduate. On 12 December 2019, members of the Veteran Success Committee and on-campus supporters celebrated the pending graduation of Sarah Knapp (pictured right) and Mitchel Roland (below, right). They were provided skyhawk student veteran coins from the veteran services coordinator and provided a chance to thank all those who assisted them during their academic challenges. Both of these students were constant fixtures in support of student veteran’s initiatives while attending UT Martin. On 14 December 2019, they walked across the skyhawk stage to become graduates. We wish them all the best.



## ALUMNI NEWS

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The first SVA newsletter was established to highlight the ongoing events and accomplishments for a military-affiliated student population. President Ronald Reagan once said, “Some people wonder all their lives if they’ve made a difference, veterans don’t have that problem.” This has never been more true, and this population continues to find ways to make a difference following their service to this country.

**Timothy McClain** (pictured front, center), a U.S. Army Veteran who served from October 1990 to October 1995, is a UT Martin alum who represents this exemplary service. Tim graduated from South Fulton High School in 1990 before entering the military. At the completion of his service, he began working on his higher education degree. Tim graduated cum laude from Mid-Continent University in 2013 and later enrolled at UT Martin, where he was a graduate of the Alpha Tier S.A.L.U.T.E. program, which works to assist and highlight academic achievements of veterans. He served as the Skyhawk Veterans Association president from 2016-2017, and was a student representative of the UT Martin Veterans Success Committee. He also began a small business called MR Floors, Floor Care and Cleaning Services, and serves as a warehouse manager for a defense contractor called Mountain Horse Solutions located in Union City, Tennessee. He graduated summa cum laude from UT Martin with a Bachelor of Science in Social Work in fall 2017.



While Tim works hard to make a difference in many ways, his highest priorities are service to his family and being a positive role model in his community. He has been an active church youth leader for more than 10 years and participates in speaking engagements for area schools about faith and dangers of drugs and alcohol. He has coached a youth girls’ basketball team for five years and assists in coaching AAU basketball. He has been married to his wife, Tammy, since 1992, and the couple has three children—Tory (26), Tia (22), and Trey (18). He also has a six-year-old granddaughter, Milee (Tory’s daughter). His two sons-in-law currently serve, one in the Army and one in the Air Force.

## VETERANS SUCCESS COMMITTEE

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In September 2019, UT Martin hired Jason Earley as veteran services coordinator following his retirement from a 20-year career on active duty in the U.S. Army. As a retired captain, Earley maintains experience serving in various leadership and staff positions within the military. On his last assignment, he spent four years serving on a staff within the Ball State University Military Science Department, where he instructed cadets in the classroom and in field environments while serving on various university committees.

He graduated from South Fulton High school in 1994 and holds a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia College, Missouri and a Master of Arts from Western Kentucky University. His office is located in room 125 of Gooch Hall, across from the Veterans Lounge, or he can be reached at (731) 881-1689 or [jeasley3@utm.edu](mailto:jeasley3@utm.edu).

The Veterans Success Committee held meetings during the fall 2019 semester highlighting new members and the goals and direction for

the future of the campus. It isn't difficult to look at this collection of volunteers and see its dedication to helping veteran students and dependents achieve their academic and professional goals.

Learn more at [utm.edu/departments/veteranaffairs/committee.php](http://utm.edu/departments/veteranaffairs/committee.php)



## SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

- Issac Mecklin received the \$5500 Gold Star Family Scholarship for the 2018-2019 academic year.
- Lee Tatum received the \$1,020 Yellow Ribbon award for the 2018-2019 academic year.
- Issac Mecklin and Benjamin Mehr received the \$500 Gold Star Family Scholarship for the 2019-2020 academic year.

- Lee Tatum received the \$360 Yellow Ribbon award for the 2019-2020 academic year.

For more information on veteran scholarships and grants, visit:

[utm.edu/departments/veteranaffairs/scholarships.php](http://utm.edu/departments/veteranaffairs/scholarships.php)

## NOTABLE EVENTS

### Tennessee Higher Education Committee Conference

In October 2019, Dr. Jamie Mantooth, Jason Earley and Carah Hooten attended the THEC conference on behalf of the university. The conference placed emphasis on identifying and discussing best practices to support military-affiliated students on campus with recruitment and retention efforts and operational support of academic goals. The participants were able to interact with two Medal of Honor recipients, veteran counselors and authors, and current students still serving within the Armed Forces.

The university was awarded the 2019-2020 Veteran Reconnect Grant from THEC for the advancement of academic accomplishments for military-affiliated students. We intend to focus our grant-funded efforts to financially assist a cohort of students while ensuring close faculty and staff mentorship during their first two years at the university. This strategy will provide specific data for future research towards new initiatives for these students.



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