

‘These Scholarships Change Lives’

Receiving a VFW Help A Hero scholarship helped keep one veteran from the burden of taking on significant debt or having to work multiple full-time jobs while in school

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Jack Baustian serves in the 114th Fighter Wing with the South Dakota Air National Guard in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He is also a member of VFW Post 3061 in Vermillion, South Dakota.

Baustian says his family has a rich military heritage. Both his grandfathers and father served. After watching his older brother enlist in his senior year of high school, Baustian decided to enlist as well.

He joined the military in 2016 and worked as an F-16 crew chief for his first seven years of service. In 2018, he had the opportunity to deploy with his brother to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan as a part of Operation Freedom Sentinel.

“It’s an experience that I will always cherish,” he said.

Baustian was promoted into the Maintenance Operations Center as a maintenance operations controller. He has since obtained the rank of technical sergeant in this role.

Furthering his education was always important to Baustian. However, he knew that funding his postgraduate degree was going to be difficult. That’s when he learned about the VFW “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship” from a fellow airman. Upon applying for the scholarship himself, Baustian was shocked and grateful to be a recipient.

“I would like to extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who makes this scholarship possible,” he said. “These scholarships change lives.”

With a piece of the puzzle figured out, Baustian attended the University of South Dakota, where he earned his Master of Public Administration.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

“Funding a postgraduate education is a common barrier for a lot of people,” he said. “With this scholarship, the burden of taking on significant debt or having to work multiple full-time jobs and focus on school was relieved.”

Since graduating in May 2023, Baustian has served as the assistant to the city manager for the city of Vermillion. He intends to continue his career in local government administration.

“I have a passion for public service and civic engagement,” Baustian said. “I want to learn from and contribute to the Vermillion community and its development. A career isn’t always about money. Growing up in a small, rural community helped me understand that. I want to have a positive impact on everyone around me.

“I will always be appreciative of the VFW and their mission,” he continued. “Without that scholarship, I’m not sure any of this would have happened.”

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