



New Jersey Bankers Education Foundation, Inc.

New Jersey Bankers Education Foundation Supports Veterans and Their Dependents



Photo Caption:

Left to right - Chuck Robbins, Special Assistant for Veterans Outreach, State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs; Frank Kissel, Thomas Krouse (Rutgers vet student), Scot Hakem (Rutgers vet student), John McWeeney, Kara Connelly (Foundation Recipient), James Meredith, Robert Stillwell, James Silkensen, Gary Metules (Heritage Bank). Scot and Thomas benefited from the Foundation's contribution to Rutgers office of Veterans Affairs to pay for books.

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NJBankers members and staff, met at the Veterans House at Rutgers University with scholarship recipient **Kara Connelly** and several Rutgers veteran students that have been assisted by the Foundation. The Foundation was created in 2005 with the purpose of assisting dependents of service members that had given their lives in service to our country in the post 9-11 Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. Subsequently, the Foundation purpose was expanded to assist dependents of those service members disabled in these conflicts. Also, beginning in 2010, the Foundation contributed to the Office of Veteran Services at Rutgers University to provide assistance to veteran students facing temporary financial setbacks or to assist in filling the gap between government benefits and educational expenses.

The Foundation has been assisting Ms. Connelly, 28, since shortly after her husband, Army Corporal **Brian Michael Connelly**, died in Iraq in 2009. While she is eligible to receive government benefits, they did not fully cover her education expenses. With her scholarship from the Foundation, Ms. Connelly was able to complete her bachelor's degree and recently graduated with her master's degree from Monmouth University. "This is all very exciting for me as I begin the next phase of moving forward. I feel such pride for what I've accomplished and exceptional gratitude towards those who have lent me the help and support I needed. After all the kindness and generosity I have received, I hope to help others in their time of need and make a difference," Ms. Connelly said of the help she received from the Foundation. She hopes to become a Counselor in a New Jersey Public School.

Rutgers' Marine veteran students **Tom Krause**, 24, and **Scott Hakim**, 23, discussed how they personally benefited from the Foundation's contributions with assistance in paying the ever-increasing costs of text books. Mr. Krause noted that this financial assistance "keeps our minds on books and not the physical costs of the books."

Retired U.S. Army Col. **Stephen Abel**, director of the Office of Veteran and Military programs at the school, noted that a lot of our men and women face challenges in terms of being able to focus on their academic career while they are worrying about how to pay tuition or how to pay for books. . .the New Jersey Bankers have stepped up to the plate here at Rutgers to help us help veterans succeed."



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The Courage to Go On

(as previously published in the Georgian Court University Magazine, Spring 2008 Issue)



Photo Caption:

Scholarship Recipient: *Pictured are Scholarship recipient Casey Duffy and (l to r) Former Chairman Robert Monteith, Foundation Chairman Robert Stillwell, Legacy League President James Silkensen and Joseph Salzano of the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at Georgian Court University.*

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On June 4, 2004, Casey Duffy's world was shattered when her husband was killed in an ambush of his National Guard unit in Iraq. Only 23 years old, and the mother of 9-month-old Ryan, there was only one thing that was clear to her at the time – she had to continue living. Part of that was earning a degree and providing for herself and for her son.

So, Casey left her job at the Point Pleasant daycare center where she had worked for eight years and enrolled at Ocean County College. After she completed her degree there, she began coursework at Georgian Court.

Although Casey qualified for tuition assistance through the Veteran's Administration, as well as for some financial aid, the cost of the college was still difficult to manage. Enter the New Jersey League of Community Bankers, and independent consortium of 71 Garden State banks. The organization founded a scholarship for any child or spouse of a service member killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"They called me, and I filled out the packet they sent me and sent it back. They contacted me within a week. The scholarship covers everything that my financial aid and VA benefits don't cover. It's been a huge relief," she says. Casey will graduate in December with a degree in psychology. After that, she intends to work with children, putting her years at the daycare center and her love of children to good use.

"Originally, I was going to go into teaching, but I got more and more into psychology," she says, "I want to work with children in a school setting or with children that have behavioral and mental issues. I love children and know that's where I can make a difference."

Casey says that the scholarship, which was initially funded with \$200,000 from its sponsoring organization, is looking for qualified applicants. Those who are interested should contact Jim Meredith at 908-272-8500, ext. 614.