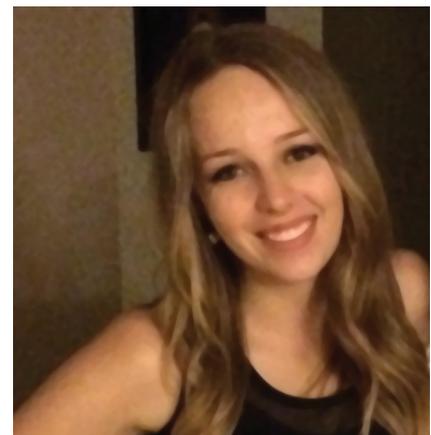




EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER & COMMITMENT

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Lynnzie Leavitt’s father, who was Activated National Guard, deployed and landed in Iraq on her 12th birthday. “We had 2 weeks’ notice about his deployment,” shared Lynnzie. With only one other military-connected student in her school, it was a tough transition. Lynnzie felt as if no one around her knew what was going on about the war – or understood it. “Another National Guard unit in the area had recently returned from Afghanistan. I walked into the grocery store one day to see yellow ribbon magnets in the clearance bin. People just didn’t realize there were other soldiers in the community that were still deploying,” shared Lynnzie.



In 2008, when her father was in Afghanistan, Lynnzie learned that a large number of single soldiers were not receiving packages. She became involved with the National Honor Society and organized a fundraiser to send these soldiers gifts. “I put up a flyer about the project in a classroom. The teacher actually walked up to me and suggested that we do another project. He had heard about the transition out of Iraq and assumed all the soldiers were home,” explained Lynnzie. Frequent situations like that were the driving force behind her

college. In her junior year of high school, Lynnzie’s counselor told her about the Daniels Fund Scholarship, a four-year college scholarship for graduating high school seniors who demonstrate exceptional character, leadership, and a commitment to serving their communities. After writing eight essays over the Thanksgiving break, she got a call for an interview. “I told them that I was passionate about helping military families. I really just wanted to help people find and use the resources available to them – there are lots of resources that go unused

CT at the time, told her what a great military community Killeen had. Lynnzie explained that there was a small military community in Utah. She shared that it was different to live in a military community and be taught by professors who taught Veterans than to learn about them in a text book. “We lived in a small non-military community growing up, so I was excited to be in an area where there were a lot of military and in a school that supported Veterans.”

Lynnzie had family members in the area when she moved to Texas, but they had a

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involvement with the military community. Lynnzie contacted the National Guard Youth Program and began volunteering everywhere she could. “I love being with other military kids because I remember how isolated I felt. There are so many resources available, that shouldn’t happen,” shared Lynnzie. Lynnzie knew she wanted to work with military families to help them find resources in their communities. A first-generation scholar, she also knew she wanted to attend

because people just don’t know about them,” said Lynnzie. Her passion shone through because she received a full scholarship. “Bill Daniels wanted to send kids to college who wanted to make a change in their community. Other military kids should know this is out there. It changed everything for me.” She began her study at the University of Utah, but later transferred to Texas A&M University-Central Texas (TAMU-CT) after her uncle, who was attending TAMU-

permanent change of station (PCS) three months after she arrived. She remained in the area on her own. She hoped when she got to Texas she could focus more on Veterans and she has. She has volunteered at the USO frequently, but finding a job with part time hours has proved difficult. Lynnzie currently works full time at the courthouse in addition to being a full time student. Her hard work and motivation is inspiring and hopefully encourages others to follow their goals.