



FALL/WINTER 2016

# CSU ALUMNI MAGAZINE

## REWIND IN THE BLIND

*The mission of two  
veterans to reach  
their fellow soldiers*

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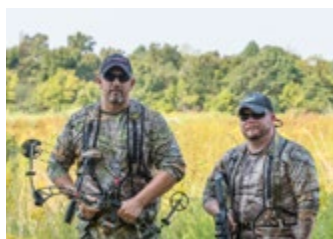
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# LETTER FROM THE **EDITOR**



Beloved readers,

It is hard to believe that we are embarking on yet another commencement ceremony. A new group of esteemed graduates will join the Alumni Association and share with you the common ground of a CSU degree. I know you all will welcome them with open arms.

We are so proud to hear of what you all are doing in your careers, families, and communities. I for one never tire of learning how you are bettering the lives of those around you every day. When I speak to those of you who join a new club or organization, connect on social media, or attend one of our networking socials across the country, it always fills me with great pride to get to know you all as individuals and learn your stories. I am sure there are days you feel like you aren't making that big of a difference but I encourage you to persevere; you are making a great difference and people are taking notice.

The CSU alumni community has proven to not be held back by the degree they received online rather than in a traditional classroom. We have shown the world how real connections can be made and strong bonds can be formed with your fellow Knights, however far away they may be. The pride you exhibit for your Alma Mater and the ties you create with fellow Knights is not only ground breaking in the education realm; it's inspiring.

As always, I would love to hear from you! Share any ideas you have for further ways to promote engagement with your alumni community or story ideas for future editions of the CSU Alumni Magazine.

None of this is possible without each and every one of you. Together, we can rise to exciting heights.

Happy reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Reilly".

Libby Reilly  
Editor-in-Chief



## **We would love to hear from you!**

Do you have ideas for your *CSU Alumni Magazine* or questions regarding the Alumni Association?

Please send an email to **[CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu)**

# LETTER FROM THE **ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT**



I ASSURE YOU THAT  
THE DEGREE DOES MAKE  
A BIG DIFFERENCE. ”

Greetings fellow Knights,

Once again we are rapidly approaching our annual graduation and fellow Knights will stand beside us in our future endeavors.

Our CSU alumni chapters are quickly finding themselves standing up and becoming a firm aspect of the local communities in which they are located. Let us look at how we can incorporate ourselves into the activities that support those communities.

When we first looked at a mascot, I submitted the idea of the Knight. The original Knights represented the church and lords, and were studious and stood by those in need. This is how I see ourselves in our day-to-day endeavors and why you should all be proud to call yourself a CSU Knight.

On another, sadder note, we recently lost one of our own. I found out about this alumnae's passing from her stepmother who was in one of my recent classes. Our fallen Knight was a graduate from the class of 2015. Upon reading of this very sad event, I was concerned about how many other CSU alumni may have passed or are very sick and we are not aware. This cannot and should not happen. We are family, even if we have never met or live worlds apart. We have all been through the same trials and tribulations. The challenges of work, family and studies bring us all together. I believe we should recognize our fallen Knights and let those who are sick know they are in our thoughts and prayers. Please assist me in taking this vision forward.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your hard work in completing your studies. You inspire me every day.

Please continue to spread the word about your time at CSU and the benefits of obtaining your degree.

Let us be the Knights in this hectic world.

Best wishes and continued success.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Blessing".

Ralph Blessing  
Alumni Association President

**SEND US YOUR  
CSU STORY!**

**Do you have a story idea for future editions  
of the CSU Alumni Magazine?**

Submit your story online at [Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us](https://Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us)  
or email [CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu](mailto:CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu)

# NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

WRITTEN BY: ANDIE BILLS

## The Gulf Coast Chapter Charter Networking Social marks CSU's 2nd official chapter!

On Saturday, September 24, CSU officially inducted the Gulf Coast alumni chapter. With 139 names on the charter, the Gulf Coast Chapter is currently the largest charter to date. Students, alumni and friends got together at Skopelos at New World in Pensacola, Florida and shared their love for their Alma Mater, while getting to know one another during this historical event. This gathering was the kick-off for the chapter members to meet one-on-one, in a laid-back atmosphere, before the real work starts. Plans for 2017 include scheduled chapter meetings, community service involvement, and meet-ups to share CSU stories and networking opportunities.

With two official chapters marked down in CSU history, The Lone Star state is next! Plans are being made to charter the Lone Star alumni chapter in 2017. Currently, there are 147 alumni who have claimed their place on the chapter charter. If you live in Texas and are wanting to be a part of CSU history, this is your window to join the chapter. Come 2017, the charter will be set in stone, but this does not mean alumni are not able to join. We have thousands of Texas alumni who have not joined yet and we encourage you to be a part of this unique group.



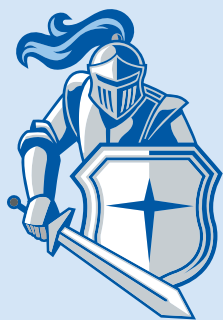
Chapter involvement is a great way to stay connected to your Alma Mater for both life and career advancement. You will never know where membership could lead you!



## Atlanta, Gulf Coast, Lone Star State... Who's next?

CSU alumni chapters are growing and it is up to YOU to decide who will charter next! We have several chapter locations rapidly growing, but it will be up to our alumni and their involvement to decide who should officially charter after Texas. Be sure to check out the Alumni page of the CSU website to see if a chapter is being started in your area. If so, be sure to join and make CSU history!

CHAPTER	MEMBERSHIP
Atlanta, GA	206 members
Chicago, IL	14 members
Columbus, OH	8 members
Gulf Coast	140 members
Hawaii	18 members
Lone Star, TX	147 members
Los Angeles, CA	16 members
New York, NY	19 members
Richmond, VA	49 members



## Who is eligible to join a CSU Alumni Chapter?

Members of the Alumni Association are also eligible to join regional alumni chapters. CSU is one of the few online universities to offer regional alumni chapters, which allow its members to closely network with one another. The opportunity to network on a personal level results in not only job and promotional prospects, but also the chance to establish lifelong friendships. The regional alumni chapters are governed by the membership and hold events throughout the year, providing the platform to network with fellow Knights and learn about volunteer opportunities in their local communities.

### **FUTURE CHAPTER LOCATIONS AND HOW TO JOIN**

If you are a CSU alumnus (graduate from an associate, bachelor's or master's program) and would like to join, follow these simple steps:

1. Visit [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/alumni](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/alumni) and click "Join the CSU Alumni Association."
2. Review the articles and documents.
3. Apply under "Alumni Chapters."

**IT IS FREE, FUN AND EASY TO JOIN.**

# CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

WRITTEN BY: LIBBY REILLY

Did you begin your time at Columbia Southern University because of the flexibility of completely online courses but at times longed, and maybe still long, for the involvement and engagement that comes with a traditional, brick and mortar campus?

Lucky for you, there are a plethora of ways to get involved and connect with fellow Knights! Even as an alumnus, you can connect through clubs and organizations based on merit or common interests and through various social media platforms!

Read on to learn more about the "extracurricular" ways to get involved as a CSU Knight, then head on over to [columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni/organizations](http://columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni/organizations) to join the organization that speaks to you!

## CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- **Student Veterans Association**

Our SVA chapter is open to students, alumni, active duty, retired and military family members!



- **American Criminal Justice Association**

ACJA is a group of individuals who work in the criminal justice system or are taking courses in the criminal justice track.



- **The Order of the Sword and Shield**

An academic and professional honor society dedicated to homeland security, information systems security, criminal justice, criminal justice administration, fire science, fire administration and emergency services management.

- **CSU Knights Run**

The club is for anyone who just wants to get their feet moving. Whether you've never before classified yourself as a "runner" or are gearing up for your umpteenth marathon, members will have access to schedules, tips, forums and the ability to connect with others, completing challenges and building momentum.



- **CSU Knights Read**

This cyber club is for those who enjoy reading more than just textbooks. Members can share their favorite book or



authors, discover new titles, and participate in guided discussions.

- **The National Society of Leadership and Success**

This is a merit-based honor society with membership by invitation only. CSU is one of more than 200 esteemed chapters nationwide.



- **Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society**

This honor society is for alumni with a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degree. Students and alumni can also connect through various social media channels in a safe and monitored environment!

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Schools App for Facebook**

Invitations are sent to all students for this private community, which is accessed through your Facebook account.

- **Facebook Closed Group**

This dedicated closed group for students and alumni encourages conversation, questions, and connections.

- **CSU LinkedIn Group**

A way for students and alumni to connect with each other and CSU representatives on LinkedIn.



**We are always listening if you have any ideas for new clubs, organization, honor societies, or places you would like us to visit. As alumni, I am sure CSU played an important role in your life and we want to remain a part of your life for years to come. We look forward to meeting you out on the road or having you come visit us here in Orange Beach.**



# CONGRATS TO HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

The following is the list of Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society inductees. This annual listing represents a compiled list of graduates from October 2015 to October 2016. CSU extends its congratulations to the graduates for their outstanding work and efforts!



---

Dale Krageschmidt  
Darcy Brown  
Delores Michelle Lam  
Dillon Cox  
Erika Beck  
Howard Elliott  
James Sneddon  
Latishia Golden  
Melissa Hein  
Patrick Mazza  
Ricky Godbolt  
Thomas Harris  
Tinashe Chinouyazve

---



Joshua McGinnis, 2015 MS Occupational Safety and Health

## THE FLAMES OF PTSD

WRITTEN BY:  
JOSHUA MCGINNIS

**As military firefighters, we are in more danger inside the wire than on the outside. Aircraft crashes could range from UAVs, helicopters, armed F-16s, C-5s to name a few. This includes armed weapon systems, carcinogenic hazardous materials, fire and explosive safety systems. Other hazards on base include response to indirect fire attacks and general fires that would be reported. The fire department has a rescue crew with assigned medics to assist in any medical emergencies as they would occur.**

My second tour in Iraq was much different from the first. I learned that my firefighting teams and I were to be stationed in Joint Base Balad, Iraq. This may seem the most ideal location to most deployments; however, experiences differ between combat veterans.

My role in this was leadership as a crew chief and Rescue Air Mobility Squad Non-Commissioned Officer (RAMS NCOIC). This would be a rather difficult role in which leadership and

## ALUMNI POINT OF VIEW

team-building became crucial. This required the trust and confidence in your fellow team member to push themselves to mitigate each emergency and take care of each other. Training, more training and further training took place to ensure each team member knew their role and how to perform interchangeably as needed. The firefighters that I had the privilege to train performed exceptionally well.

The return was very difficult for my teams. We returned to Germany and almost immediately, five of us were transferred to Fort Rucker, Alabama. Two years of fire department administration did not abate the memories of the previous experience.

Following a promotion, I was selected to become a master resilience trainer. This program is the result of a multi-year study performed to determine the effects and continued treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. It teaches service members to recognize the signs and symptoms while accepting that anger and other symptoms are natural and should not be ignored. Coping exercises and goal achievement were paramount to improving ourselves as we lived with PTSD.

I returned to my organization following the certification and brought this to my former teams. This opened an inner and exterior dialogue among one another. This brought my team much closer while allowing an improved understanding of other firefighters within the fire department that had never deployed to the combat zone.

We've become family and I will never forget standing on the taxiway waiting for that UH-60 to pick us up for another mission outside the wire with only small arms and a stokes basket of extrication tools to get the job done. 🇺🇸

## KEEPING ALUMNI CONNECTIONS STRONG

WRITTEN BY: CAROLINE WALTERS

Fall is such a wonderful time of year. The air is cooler, colors are richer and graduation regalia has made its appearance on campus.

Since its inception in 2013, the CSU Alumni Association has grown to more than 3000 members and two chartered chapters: the Atlanta Chapter, and most recently added, the Gulf Coast Chapter. Regional chapters provide an environment where members can network closely with each other, stay in touch with their Alma Mater and establish lifelong friendships.

CSU wants to grow not only our alumni membership, but also our chartered chapters. The CSU Alumni Association is only as strong as its members are active. Won't you help us grow? If you are interested in having a chapter chartered in your area, we are ready to make it happen!

One of the best things about what we do in Student and Alumni Engagement is hearing from and building connections with our Knights across the nation. Since I joined the CSU family, I have had the pleasure of meeting many CSU alumni, each one with a unique story and connection to this great university.

Having worked more than 15 years in higher education, I am often reminded of how priceless my work is. I get to hear and share the stories of the institution and those who call it home. When it comes to the vitality of a university, alumni are the heartbeat. Your stories of success motivate others to journey down the path of self-betterment. You have shown it is possible to succeed despite various obstacles. You tell the true tales of our institution and I would love to hear yours! We are always anxious to get to know the individuals who make up our Alumni Association and the stories behind their success.

If you are reading this, you deserve a big congratulations. Whether you have just graduated or are a founding member of the CSU Alumni Association: Once a Knight, always a Knight. 🍷



Caroline Walters joined the CSU team in August 2016 as the associate vice president of outreach and alumni engagement.



## ONLINE JOB HUNTING TIPS

WRITTEN BY: ELIZABETH MIMMS

**Using online resources to connect to employers, identify job openings and submit resumes is one of the best tactics to landing your dream job.**

Gone are the days of seeing a "help wanted" sign in a business window and walking in to an immediate job interview. For most, today's job search leaves out much of the obvious personality and hand-shaking; it can seem daunting to portray an entire job history and personality to a potential employer online; however, by creating a savvy online profile and learning how to navigate online professional networking sites, it is possible to stand out among the crowd of job hopefuls. Follow these 10 online job hunting tips to find and score the job of your dreams.

### 1. Carve Out Time

Schedule at least 15 minutes a day to work on career-related material such as a resume, cover letter or thank you notes. You will be surprised with how much you can accomplish when you set aside even this small amount of time! Also, be sure to carve out time to regularly update and check job listings and online networking profiles.

**2. Join Groups in LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is not only for connecting to individuals. You can join LinkedIn groups related to CSU, professional organizations and career fields you want to join. Remember that every discussion you “like” or comment on is an opportunity to market yourself to recruiters. Keep in mind that most groups also contain a “Jobs” tab.

**3. Get Noticed**

Completing 100% of your social media profiles increases your search ranking and gives recruiters a good impression. It is always worth the extra time and effort to be seen by potential employers.

**4. Use Keywords**

Review job postings and company profiles to make sure your profile is full of key words that will attract attention. Social media profiles are appealing if they contain the same words and phrases that are found in job descriptions, as well as industry-specific verbiage. It is also wise to include action words (organize, monitor, facilitate) and leadership terminology (appointed, commissioned, exemplified).

**5. Follow Companies**

Use LinkedIn and Glassdoor as company research tools. When you see a position that you like on a job board, check out the LinkedIn company page and click “follow company.” Visit Glassdoor.com to read company reviews, get tips on interview questions and salary negotiation.

**6. Utilize All Your Search Options**

Although you might find a job on another site, LinkedIn can tell you how you are personally connected to that organization through your network. Use these connections to research people at the company.

**7. Reach Out**

Don’t be shy when you receive connection requests. Everyone you know – family, friends, professors, neighbors – can serve as a connection and help you keep an eye out for the specific kind of job you are seeking. Best yet, they might be able to introduce you to other targeted contacts.

**8. Be Persistent**

Use social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to send follow-up messages to new contacts. When you send someone

**CONTACT A CAREER DEVELOPMENT COUNSELOR**

**Phone :** 877.297.6192

**Email:** careerservices@columbiasouthern.edu

**LinkedIn:** Columbia Southern University Career Services

**Facebook:** Columbia Southern University Career Center

**CAREER SERVICES OFFICE HOURS**

8 a.m.– 5 p.m. CST Monday–Thursday,

8 a.m. – 3 p.m. CST Friday


a message through LinkedIn, a mutually-connected recruiter or hiring manager can view your profile and check out your qualifications.

**9. Communicate**

By regularly updating your status, you can better stay on people’s radar during your job search. Share links to articles, like other people’s comments or statuses and pay attention to events others are attending that could have good career information. This shows you are current, involved, and anxious to grow your career in that field.

**10. Use the Social Media Job Portals**

You can access entry-level jobs and internships posted on LinkedIn; while less prominent, Glassdoor also has an accessible job search feature.

While the task of reaching out to someone might seem daunting, the goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. Investing time to research a company, identify people in the industry that could give insight into a job or even provide a recommendation is all worth the effort. Use these tips to get started and always keep Columbia Southern University Career Services in mind if you have questions about your LinkedIn profile, resume writing, interview skills or exploring career options. Our services are open to students and graduates and include personal career counseling via email, phone and Skype. Appointments are made through CareerQuest, our password protected database. 

Use these tips to get started and always keep CSU Career Services in mind if you have questions about your LinkedIn profile, resume writing, interview skills or exploring career options.



# REWIND IN THE BLIND

*The mission of two veterans to reach their fellow soldiers*

Jason Norris and Zachary Connerty met in 2001 while stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Zach was shift supervisor for a military police unit and Jason was newly assigned on base. Jason was to shadow Zach in order to learn the ropes on Fort Jackson but instead, he asked that he be provided a patrol car so he could figure things out on his own and “stay out of the way.” The two have been best friends ever since.

More than two decades, six continents and a dozen duty stations between them, they will soon retire; however, they will always be soldiers bonded by experience and friendship. Experiencing the toll on the mind and body of deployments and military service, Jason and Zach went through a wounded soldier programs together.

**“It was great seeing what the events had to offer and meeting service members we never would have met otherwise,” said Jason. “Once you go through a program like that and see other folks who are in your shoes, or even a lot worse off, it puts things in perspective.”**

The events this program had to offer took the service men and women outdoors, outside of the typical therapies offered by the military. Soon after Zach and Jason joined this program, however, it was discontinued. The friends decided to have a guys’ weekend and drive to the World Deer Expo in Birmingham, Alabama. After talking to outfitters, business owners, and people who knew of the previous program, Zach and Jason began to realize that there was a void that needed to be filled- a void that they could fill. “Jason and I have always had a love for the outdoors and always talked about the possibility of doing business together one day. As the discussion and questions kept pointing to the idea of it happening now, we both looked at each other and finally just said, ‘why not us?’ We knew what that outreach program did for us and we now have the opportunity to provide that continued service to other veterans and wounded warriors,” said Zach. The ideas were born and would soon evolve into the nonprofit organization, BUC-OPS (Bonded Under Combat Outreach Programs).

◀ **JASON NORRIS, C/O 2014**  
MS Emergency Services Management

**ZACHARY CONNERTY, C/O 2013** ▶  
BS Criminal Justice Administration



The premise of the program is relatively simple: gather a group of service members to attend an outdoor activity (hunting, fishing, archery, camping, etc.), and watch change and healing unfold naturally through a common bond and the therapy of the great outdoors.

"For us, we already know what kind of person it takes to handle the situations we've been in, so it goes without saying that we understand each other. Talking is therapy in itself but throwing in outdoor activities adds a sense of comfort that you can go out there and be yourself, escape the island so many of us put ourselves on," says Jason.

Each event will also include volunteers, possibly avid outdoorsmen and women, from fields such as Veteran Affairs, Veterans and Family Welfare and medical, financial and physical services. This will create an enduring mentoring relationship to connect the veteran with an individual they know and are comfortable talking to about different programs and issues. Then, when the hunting or fishing trip is over, that veteran has a name and a phone number to call when they have a need. The goal with this is to create a "continuous branch of connection" long after the trip is complete.

The motto of BUC-OPS is "Rewind in the Blind." In hunting, a blind is a structure in which hunters conceal themselves and hide from animals.

"When you're sitting in the blind with somebody, it's a lot easier to talk about what's on your mind, relive something you've been through or just hash something out that you wouldn't normally say out loud. Veteran to veteran or therapist to veteran, it's a lot easier to talk about things outdoors than it is within four walls," says Zach. Jason explains, "Programs like ours are without walls, without desks, without people sitting across from you pretending to listen to a service member trying to open up about their issues but really they are just typing away. They're not conversing; they're just checking off boxes and the service member is constantly cognizant of what they say because one wrong word could affect their future drastically. Being around a campfire or in a blind, there are no computers, no forms, no recording. Having someone just listen and pay attention to what you have to say—that's therapy."

"We knew what that outreach program did for us and we now have the opportunity to provide that continued service to other veterans and wounded warriors," said Zac.

Cover Story Continues on page 14



Photography by Allen Holz Photography

“ Doing things outdoors with people who have walked in your shoes makes you feel so much more alive,” said Jason. ”

**Buc-Ops hopes to set themselves apart by creating a network of solid, continuous relationships...**

BUC-OPS will partner with companies and individuals who offer a variety of outdoor activities, as well as private landowners and ranchers. This will allow for donated time, land and resources for various trips that veterans and wounded warriors in the program can apply to attend, free of charge.

The non-profit organization allows qualified veterans of all wars, branches and both men and women to attend trips with people and activities that complement their personality and background. The only requirements to be included in the program is that the service member or veteran must have served in an approved conflict or combat operation and be considered or have obtained no less than a 30% disability rating or status. Applicants are vetted for service records then submitted to the BUC-OPS Board of Advisors, a group of volunteer, bipartisan business owners, industry leaders and various supporters of the organization. Trips could be for an afternoon or over the span of a few nights. While the activities for each trip vary, the idea of opening the lines of communication with other service members and veterans, as well as volunteers and industry specialists, remains the cornerstone of the mission of BUC-OPS.

“We’ve found that veterans generally are not going to do a Google search for ‘mental health professional’ when they are in need. They take for granted the things that are available as an

active duty service member on base but once you retire or depart the military, things aren’t as simple as walking across post for a certain program or specialist. We want to make it an easier transition and build those mentorship relationships, especially between older and younger veterans,” said Jason.

While there are extremely helpful and diverse resources for veterans available, BUC-OPS hopes to set themselves apart by creating a network of solid, continuous relationships between veterans, their peers and various professional contacts.

“What we want to create is a network where we can bring other services and agencies to the veteran and provide a continuing service during our trips, allow clinicians and specialists to brief our veterans or even just introduce themselves, and then link them to the service member when we get home. We want to partner with other nonprofits to expand our network instead of compete with one another,” said Zach.

They are hopeful that by “rewinding in the blind,” service members and veterans will feel safe and relaxed, maybe learn a new skill or hobby, while being pointed in the right direction in order to make their life better for what they sacrificed during service to our country.

“The event, whether hunting, fishing, shooting, whatever it is, is the honey to draw folks in, what entices veterans to get off the couch, away from the bottle, off their island or whatever is making them sedentary and isolated. Doing things outdoors with people who have walked in your shoes makes you feel so much more alive,” said Jason.

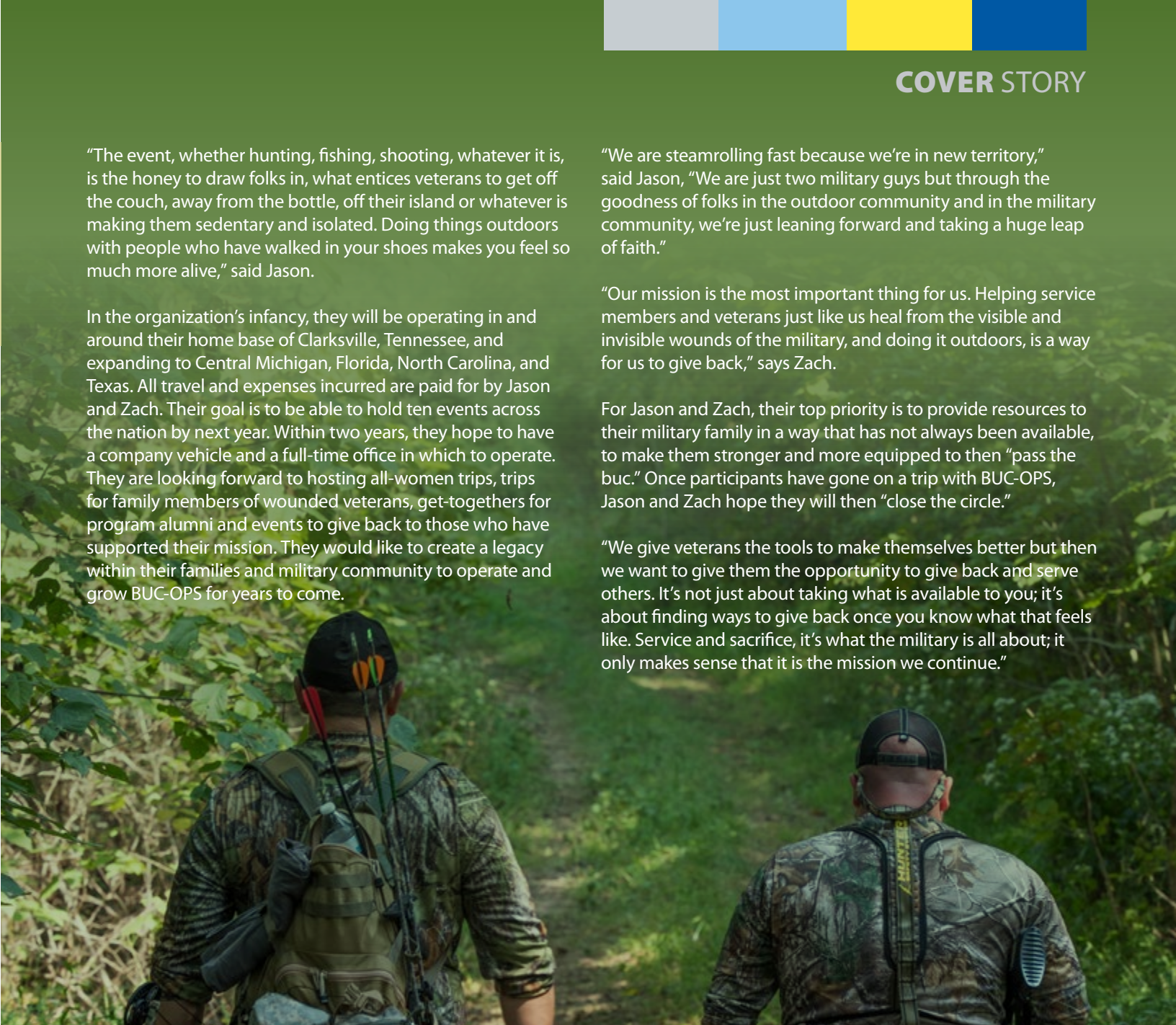
In the organization’s infancy, they will be operating in and around their home base of Clarksville, Tennessee, and expanding to Central Michigan, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas. All travel and expenses incurred are paid for by Jason and Zach. Their goal is to be able to hold ten events across the nation by next year. Within two years, they hope to have a company vehicle and a full-time office in which to operate. They are looking forward to hosting all-women trips, trips for family members of wounded veterans, get-togethers for program alumni and events to give back to those who have supported their mission. They would like to create a legacy within their families and military community to operate and grow BUC-OPS for years to come.

“We are steamrolling fast because we’re in new territory,” said Jason, “We are just two military guys but through the goodness of folks in the outdoor community and in the military community, we’re just leaning forward and taking a huge leap of faith.”

“Our mission is the most important thing for us. Helping service members and veterans just like us heal from the visible and invisible wounds of the military, and doing it outdoors, is a way for us to give back,” says Zach.

For Jason and Zach, their top priority is to provide resources to their military family in a way that has not always been available, to make them stronger and more equipped to then “pass the buc.” Once participants have gone on a trip with BUC-OPS, Jason and Zach hope they will then “close the circle.”

“We give veterans the tools to make themselves better but then we want to give them the opportunity to give back and serve others. It’s not just about taking what is available to you; it’s about finding ways to give back once you know what that feels like. Service and sacrifice, it’s what the military is all about; it only makes sense that it is the mission we continue.”



Jason introduced Zach to CSU after losing motivation at another online university. The two agreed it was the right choice for them because of the flexibility and freedom it gave them to work around hectic schedules and deployments. Now that they founded BUC-OPS, Jason and Zach say CSU helped open doors for networking and professional counseling opportunities.



**To learn more about Buc-Ops, register as a veteran, or find out how you can support their mission, visit [bucops.org](http://bucops.org) or find them on Facebook.**



WRITTEN BY: QUANG TRAN  
TRONG, CSU VIETNAM  
PROGRAM MANAGER



**CSU SATURDAY  
COFFEE**  
IN  
*Hồ Chí Minh*  
**VIETNAM**






To learn more about CSU Vietnam, visit [www.columbiasouthern.edu.vn](http://www.columbiasouthern.edu.vn)

Since the beginning of the CSU Vietnam program, a variety of recruitment marketing strategies have been developed and improved by the Center for International Training Cooperation (CITC), CSU’s representative in Vietnam. Saturday Coffee is an interesting initiative that has been offered since 2014 in Ho Chi Minh City (also called Saigon).

This event is based on a habit of Saigon people who enjoy going out on the weekends, visiting a nice café with their family and friends. In this kind of cozy atmosphere, nothing can prevent them from relaxing with their beloveds and sharing their emotions and life while enjoying a delicious cup of coffee or local special breakfast.

CSU Vietnam selected luxury Molinari Café on the corner of Ho Chi Minh campus to promote the Saturday Coffee event. This is an office area where many large companies are located. This is also a favorite coffee shop where middle-class business people and young couples prefer to visit. A CSU table was set up to display knight mascots, brochures and small gifts. CSU purchased the first drink for each guest, whether they were a student or not. This was a welcomed surprise and done in good faith to those who had not yet heard about CSU. CSU Vietnam team members were present to answer any questions about the programs.

This also presents an opportunity to students and graduates to meet each other. Students can share their learning experiences with other schoolmates, discuss the courses, expand their social relationships and just have fun. With CSU team members present, students can ask questions regarding their learning that they could not necessarily address in the classroom.

With a network of more than 2,000 students and graduates, it is the goal for CSU Vietnam to join together in the CSU Vietnam Chapter. Some official and unofficial meetings have been held in the past but Saturday Coffee has by far been the most successful. Saturday Coffee is a new idea to gradually link students and graduated together and proves the idiom true that “every little bit helps.” 



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## COMMUNITY SERVICE SPOTLIGHT



been playing guitar for 20 years now and I lead praise and worship for my local church every Sunday, lead another praise and worship band for a men's ministry in our community called Sons of Thunder and have also had the opportunity to play guitar for our community's annual high school musical.

Last year, I had the opportunity to provide guitar services for the Garden City Community College's production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Playing in musicals has been a true expression of my desire to help our communities. These events not only provide something awesome for our community to attend, but they also expose many young people to the arts. Encouraging others to participate in the arts and fostering an environment that grows our communities is one of the most awesome activities that one could be privileged with. In addition to the many musical performances, I have also built a home studio that I use to help local musicians record their music. Offering all of these talents and services to the community is one of the highlights of my life. I could not imagine life without the gift of music and I will continue to share that gift as often as possible with our wonderful community."

### Brent Hicks

King, North Carolina

### Russell Mowrer

Ulysses, Kansas



"I could not imagine life without the gift of music and I will continue to share that gift as often as possible..."

Class of 2016  
BS, Occupational Safety  
and Health

"I have been involved in music since I was six years old, starting with playing the piano. Music has always been something that I have enjoyed and as an adult that passion has not changed. I have always been quick to volunteer my talents for the benefit of the community starting with providing music for church. I started by playing music for church on keyboard at an early age and picked up guitar when I was 16; I currently play many different instruments including some woodwind and percussion instruments. I have



"I was the first one in my family to complete a degree and I am very proud of that. I am just trying to set the best example for my two boys."

Class of 2015  
MS, Occupational Safety  
and Health

"I am currently a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician. I started volunteering with a fire department as a junior member and have been doing it for almost 10 years now. I enjoy being able to help people in their time of need. I am a third generation volunteer firefighter; my grandfather and my father were involved with the fire service when I was little and I knew growing up I wanted to join as soon as I got old enough. I've found throughout my years as a volunteer firefighter that the best thing I can do for the citizens of my community is to always be training to improve my level of knowledge and to learn new techniques to be able to serve them better.

One of the main reasons I chose CSU for my master's and bachelor's degree was because of the ability to complete the coursework when I had extra time available. While completing my B.S. degree I was able to stay working full time for Forsyth County Emergency Services as an EMT. This allowed me to expand my knowledge in the medical field as well as being able to advance my career as a safety professional.



## David Matern

Hohenfels, Germany



"I have shared and experienced many fun moments during my involvement with the American Legion..."

Class of 2016  
BS, Business Administration

"I have been working with the American Legion - Department of Utah, a veteran's service organization, for more than 24 years. I have worked within the organization in a variety of capacities, including children and youth with the American Legion baseball, Miss American Legion Scholarship Pageant, oratorical contests, and Boys State. Each of these programs are geared toward helping high school students gain valuable experience doing things they love with opportunities to receive scholarships for school or to go on playing professional baseball (did you know more than 80% of professional baseball players got their start by playing American Legion baseball?).

Another highlight was participating every year in the Boys State program, a week-long course for high school juniors held at Weber State University. In that week, the students learn all about how the government works, they run for offices and two students are elected as state senators to go on to Boys Nation in Washington, DC.

I have shared and experienced many fun moments during my involvement with the American Legion and I eagerly await the opportunity to get back to the states and home to Utah to continue volunteer work with the American Legion.



# BECOME A PARTNER BUILD A FUTURE

Columbia Southern University offers companies, associations, municipalities and other agencies the opportunity to provide learning partner benefits to their employees and members. CSU offers a 10% tuition discount to partners' employees/members that extends to their spouses and children. CSU also offers exclusive scholarship opportunities for partners.

These exciting benefits come at no cost and can be obtained by signing a memorandum of understanding listing all benefits offered to the organization!

Becoming a CSU learning partner is easy and a great way to offer additional benefits to employees or members of your organization.



For more information on how your company or organization can become a CSU learning partner, visit

**ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni-Partner**  
or call **800.344.5021**.

## STUDENT & ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT



*Future Knight, Sharon, wins prize at CSU event*

## NO LIMIT TO WHAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH

WRITTEN BY: AMANDA MANJONE

Although CSU is an online university, many of our alumni have been able to meet each other face to face at our social events across the country. This is invaluable as it often helps connect job seekers, alumni questioning if they should return for their master's degree and those new to an area looking to make local friends!

Recently, we chartered our second regional alumni chapter, the Gulf Coast Chapter, in Pensacola, Florida. This event brought many students and alumni together who would not have met otherwise to share in the excitement and celebration of our second regional chapter. At this event, a woman searching for a job in the health administration met another woman who works in that field and was able to share invaluable tips and potential job leads. This is one of the best things about our events! There are often faculty members, career development counselors and members of the student and alumni team in attendance who can help facilitate various connections among our alumni community. We have been to more than a dozen cities in 2016 and we have no plans of slowing down.

One of my favorite memories from events this year was meeting alumnus Art Lampert and his wife, Sharon. They attended the social in Orange Beach earlier this year, traveling 13 hours to attend! The couple had been in the process of selling their house in Louisiana; however, Art was working near Huntsville, Alabama as deputy chief of the Directorate of Economic Security Law Enforcement Division. At our most recent event in Pensacola, the couple made the long journey again and it was wonderful spending time with them. They

even made a weekend of it and celebrated their anniversary on the beach. Art is looking forward to returning to CSU for his master's degree, and Sharon is excited to join the Knight family herself!

The best part of having a robust alumni community is hearing from all of you who want to help it grow. When you make suggestions or ask for an event in your area, we do all we can to make that happen! Many of our events during 2016 happened strictly because enough students and alumni asked us to come to that area. This is also true for the regional alumni chapters. We want to do all we can to put your suggestions into action; never be afraid to share your ideas!

By now, it is no surprise that CSU has some of the best alumni around! Many of you reach out and look for ways to stay connected to your Alma Mater; because of this, we are excited to launch the brand new Knight Ambassador program. This will be a formal way for alumni to show their pride, get involved and make new connections.

**Knight Ambassadors will be those esteemed members of the Alumni Association who desire to connect with prospective students and represent CSU in their communities.**



To learn more about the program and how you can become a Knight Ambassador, visit [columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni](http://columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni).

Our diverse and far-reaching alumni community is what makes CSU so special. We are doing things previously unheard of in the online education realm and people are taking notice. You are a group of exceptional individuals and as a group, you are not only impressive, you are invincible. 🍷

STAY CONNECTED WITH US! [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni-Fall](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Alumni-Fall)





## NETWORKING EVENTS

### WHERE ELSE SHOULD WE GO?

That's up to you! Let us know by joining the conversation in the Facebook Closed Group or emailing [alumni@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:alumni@columbiasouthern.edu)



TO FIND OUT MORE OR TO REGISTER FOR AN EVENT, VISIT [COLUMBIASOUTHERN.EDU/EVENTS](http://COLUMBIASOUTHERN.EDU/EVENTS)

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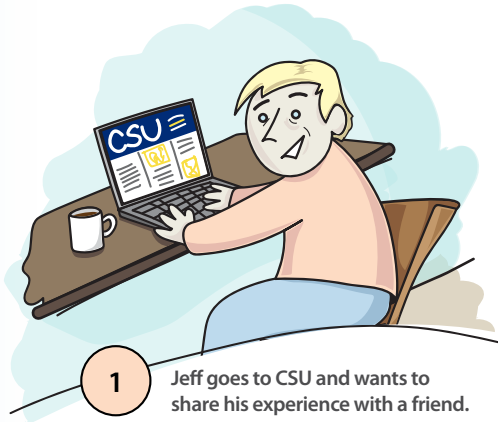
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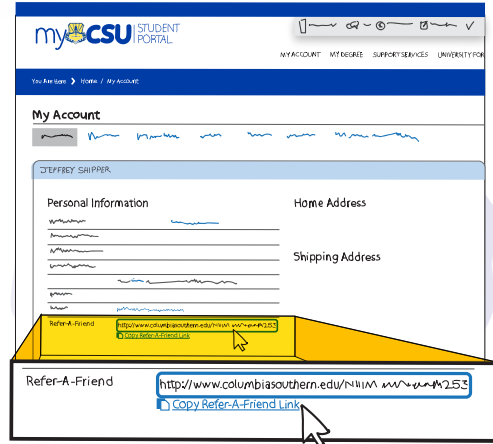
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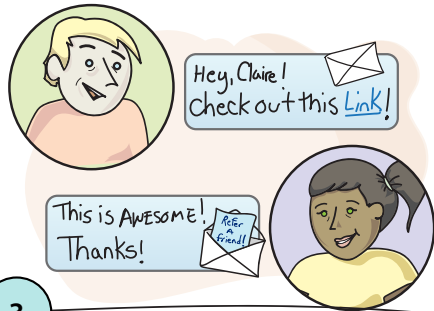
# REFER A FRIEND



1 Jeff goes to CSU and wants to share his experience with a friend.



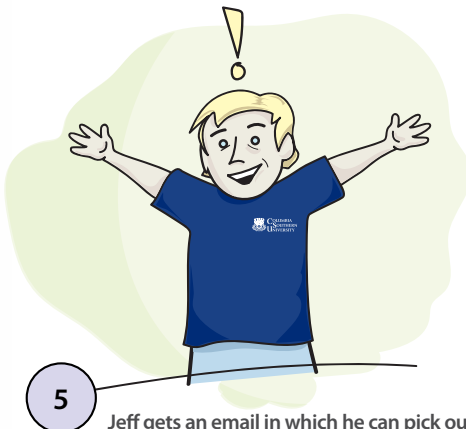
2 Jeff logs into his myCSU portal and copies his unique Refer-a-Friend link.



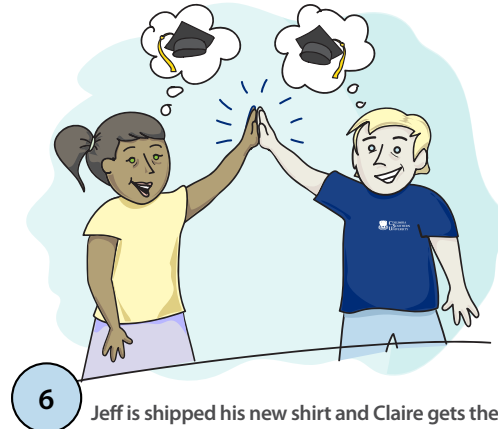
3 Jeff pastes his unique link in an email and sends it to his friend, Claire.



4 Claire opens Jeff's referral link and fills out a CSU information request form.



5 Jeff gets an email in which he can pick out his official CSU Refer-A-Friend t-shirt



6 Jeff is shipped his new shirt and Claire gets the opportunity for continued education at CSU!



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# COLUMBIA SOUTHERN

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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