



Fall 11-1-2017

Generous Donor Changes the Game for Winthrop Student Veterans

Winthrop University

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Recommended Citation

Winthrop University, "Generous Donor Changes the Game for Winthrop Student Veterans" (2017). *Winthrop News 2017*. 188.
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Generous Donor Changes the Game for Winthrop Student Veterans

Quick Facts

- An anonymous donor has given more than \$35,000 to the Student Veterans of Winthrop within the last two years.
- The donor also purchased the group 3x5 American military flags for ceremonies and the accompanying poles/bases.
- The annual Veterans Day ceremony will be at 11 a.m. on Nov. 9 in Dina's Place.



ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA — [Student Veterans of Winthrop University Vice President Sonya Sawyer](#) says she and her fellow members always strive to raise awareness of the organization and engage with their fellow student veterans.

Thanks to a generous gift, that goal just got a whole lot easier. An anonymous donor has given more than \$35,000 to the Student Veterans of Winthrop within the last two years. So far, the group has purchased a couch, a refrigerator and a wide-screen television for the **Student Veterans Center**, located in the basement of [Bancroft Hall](#).

The donor also purchased a set of 3x5 American military flags for ceremonies and the accompanying poles/bases.

"There are no words," said **President Jeff Lansdall**, an exercise science major from Rock Hill, South Carolina. "We just wish we could know who she is and thank her. We've been very fortunate."

"She has truly enabled us to really focus on how to better the lives of student veterans versus having to build a financial base," said Sawyer, a human nutrition major originally from Connecticut. "We walk in here [the center] every day and appreciate it. 'Grateful' is an understatement."

The organization will put the new military flags to good use on Nov. 9 for the annual Veterans Day Ceremony, co-sponsored with [Military, Adult, and Transfer Services](#). See details and more Veterans Day-related events:

*The **annual Veterans Day Ceremony** will begin at 11 a.m. on the steps of [Byrnes Auditorium](#) (rain location: Dina's Place) and will feature addresses from Nicholas Warr, a Marine Corps veteran and author; and Sean Mulcahy, Nation Ford High School's JROTC instructor. It is an approved cultural event.

*Afterwards, all student veterans are invited to the Student Veterans Center for a lunch provided by Groucho's Deli and ARAMARK. It's a first-come, first-served basis.

*From 3-5 p.m. that same day, the [Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections](#) will host a special exhibit and reception featuring keynote speaker Maj. Chunka A. Smith, professor of military science and chair of the Department of Military Science at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte. The exhibit will include materials from archives' Veterans History Project, a collection that aims to preserve personal oral and pictorial histories from American veterans. Refreshments will be provided.

It's free and open to the public.

Additionally, Military, Adult, and Transfer Services will have a table set up in the DiGiorgio Campus Center on Nov. 6 from 5-6:30 p.m. The campus community can write notes of appreciation to veterans, which will then be posted in the Student Veterans Center. Community members can also make a \$5 donation and dedicate a yellow ribbon on a campus tree. All proceeds go toward a charity of the student veterans' choice. All ribbons and notes will be posted during the week of Nov. 7-13.

'A deeper meaning in life'

Sawyer had attended college for a few years before she paused to take stock of her life.

"I wanted to experience and focus, and find a deeper meaning in where I wanted to be in life," she said.

She enlisted in the U.S. Army and used her interest in medicine to serve as a combat medic. She completed a tour of duty in Afghanistan and transitioned out as a specialist after four years of service. She and her husband eventually settled in Charlotte, and Sawyer began her studies at Winthrop a few semesters ago.

"If you keep your eyes and ears open to all they have to offer here, they not only have great resources; they are all willing to help," Sawyer said of Winthrop's benefits for veterans.

She specifically appreciates the Student Veterans Center and hopes events like the Veterans Day celebration will help bridge the gap between all populations at Winthrop.

Lansdall echoed a similar sentiment. He was stationed in the Pacific through the Marine Corps and transitioned out after four years, finishing as a sergeant.

"It's unusual for a university to have something like this for student veterans," he said.

Want to help Winthrop students like this generous donor? Contact the [Office of Development](#) at 803/323-2150, email giving@winthrop.edu, or visit the website at <https://www.winthrop.edu/give/>.

For more information on the Student Veterans Center and the organization, email studentveterans@winthrop.edu.

[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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