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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Freedom Alliance Surpasses \$20 Million Awarded in College Scholarships to Children of Military Heroes**

*Military families continue feeling impact of nation's longest wars.*

**DULLES, Va. – Oct. 26, 2021** – Freedom Alliance, a military support organization, has now awarded more than \$20 million in college scholarships to the children of fallen or wounded military heroes in the 20 years since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The scholarships are provided to students who have a parent that was killed or permanently disabled in the service of our country.

"It's not enough to simply mourn the death or injury of a service member," explained Freedom Alliance President, Tom Kilgannon. "A grateful nation must also care for the children of its fallen and wounded heroes and help them achieve their dreams. Our team at Freedom Alliance has humbly accepted that responsibility and in doing so, our own lives – and the lives of our supporters – have been greatly enriched by those we serve."

Freedom Alliance has experienced tremendous growth in its scholarship program. At the time of the 9/11 attacks, Freedom Alliance had awarded scholarships to 12 students for a total of \$79,000. In 2021, 583 students received scholarships totaling \$2.3 million and over the last 20 years, Freedom Alliance has helped more than 2,000 individual students complete their studies at trade schools, community colleges and four-year institutions.

A Freedom Alliance scholarship is awarded based on the parent's military service and if one child in the family is eligible, siblings are likely to also qualify if they choose to continue their education after high school. The top five areas of study among our students are: nursing, psychology, biology, business and mechanical engineering and scholarship recipients carry an average GPA of 3.21 out of 4.0. Scholarship recipients hail from all 50 states and their parents have served in each branch of the armed forces as well as fought in various campaigns including Afghanistan, Iraq, the Persian Gulf War, Beirut, Mogadishu and others.

"We are 20 years removed from the start of the war in Afghanistan," explained Kilgannon, "and the need for college assistance for the children of fallen or wounded heroes has never been greater."

There are an estimated 7,000 youths who have lost a parent in Afghanistan or Iraq and the vast majority have not yet attended college. It is estimated that over the next ten years (2022-2031), 5,500 children of service members killed in action (KIA) – and thousands more who become permanently disabled – will be eligible for the scholarship.

Shelby Summers is a scholarship recipient. In the early morning of August 3, 2009, two Casualty Assistance Officers from the Army appeared at her home to tell her and her mom that their father and husband, SFC Sev Summers had died in Afghanistan after being hit by an IED.

"Through Freedom Alliance," Shelby says, "I met a lot of young adults in my same situation. These were people who I didn't realize existed for so many years, and the connection that each of us developed with one another is something only we understand. We hold a special bond



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with one another, we can talk about our grief and rejoice about our lost parent, and it's not awkward or taboo – it's just natural, accepted and special.”

Scott Zangas attended Penn State University with the help of a Freedom Alliance scholarship. His father, Robert Zangas, was a Marine who lost his life in Iraq when he was attacked by insurgents posing as Iraqi police. Scott was about 5 years old when he lost his dad.

“Many of us have grown up without ever meeting kids who can relate to experiencing such a monumental loss,” Scott says. “Being able to finally do that offers many of us closure, and we form powerful bonds that are entirely unique. I have never felt more welcomed and at home than I am with my friends made through Freedom Alliance.”

Freedom Alliance is also especially proud of two students who have earned prestigious opportunities through the Gold Star Family Fellowship Program, created by Congress in 2019 to provide one-year fellowships with members of the House of Representatives. Brandi Anderson, whose father, Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Michael Anderson, lost his life in Ramadi, Iraq on May 2, 2004, and Julia Morris, the daughter of Captain James Morris, USMC, who died when his plane crashed in a training accident in 2000, are both currently serving with members of Congress in this program.

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**About Freedom Alliance:** Freedom Alliance was founded by Lt. Col. Oliver North, USMC (Ret.) who served for 22 years and was decorated with the Silver Star, Bronze Star for valor, and two Purple Hearts for wounds in combat. In addition to providing more than \$20 million in college scholarships, Freedom Alliance has helped thousands of injured veterans with recreational rehabilitation, care packages, mortgage-free homes, all-terrain wheelchairs, new vehicles, and more.

Learn more about Freedom Alliance at [FreedomAlliance.org](http://FreedomAlliance.org) or [facebook.com/FreedomAlliance](https://facebook.com/FreedomAlliance).