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Alumna Jess Greer Grateful for Father's Military Service

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Communications

November 11, 2014

Jessica Greer ('12)

In September 2001, Jessica Greer's father, Charles Greer, was busy pursuing his Master of Divinity degree at Gardner-Webb, driving to campus each week for courses while a young Jessica and her brother took swimming lessons in the Gardner-Webb pool. He was only one year from finishing his degree when 9/11 changed everything. He was called into active duty to serve with a military police unit in the Army National Guard.

"Dad served his first tour in Iraq when I was in middle school," Jessica remembers. "He was stationed at a prison camp there for 14 months. He did some amazing things." Among his many responsibilities, Jess's father developed and implemented an education program designed to help detainees rise above the culture of illiteracy and poverty that fosters terrorism. "I'm really proud of him," she says.

After enrolling at Gardner-Webb and employing her father's military dependent benefits for her education, Jessica saw her father deployed for a second time to Iraq during her sophomore year. This time, she endured even greater emotional challenges.

"By that time, my brother and I were both in school," Jessica says. "Beyond the fact that we were obviously worried about Dad, my mom was going through an empty nest transition completely by herself. It was just really stressful."

Charles Greer

Noticing her concern, several of Jessica's friends rallied around her, one of whom was a suitemate who also had a father serving actively in the military. Jessica's mentor and supervisor even began inviting her to enjoy family dinners with her husband and children, giving her some semblance of family structure and normalcy despite the stress.

"At Gardner-Webb," she says, "I had an unbelievable support network. In a time when my family life was a bit chaotic, the people here were like a family who kept me moving. That was really the first time I had ever been part of a community that wouldn't let me get by with just saying I was ok. People here are just very intentional about being involved in your well-being."

Today, Jessica is paying it forward as the Communications Coordinator for Undergraduate Admissions, where she has helped launch the S.E.R.V.E. Office (Student Enrollment Resources for Veteran Education). If you'd like to hear more about what Gardner-Webb has to offer military families, don't hesitate to give her a call (704-406-4486) or email her at jgreer2@gardner-webb.edu.