

**How Navarro College has Expanded the Possibilities of my Future**

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Like many community colleges throughout Texas have done for others, Navarro College has quite possibly been the most significant influence in the trajectory of my future. This is not only because of the education that I am currently receiving, but due to the one my wife has already achieved in the Navarro College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program. Her success at Navarro College was the push I needed to make a long overdue career change and inspired her youngest sister to become a nurse, receiving her education from Navarro College as well. I guess you could say we have become a family of Bulldogs.

In 2003 I enlisted in the Texas Army National Guard. I was off to basic training at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, in January of 2004 and immediately volunteered for a deployment to Iraq after basic training completion. I spent the entire year of 2005 living in a tent in Iraq. Little did I know, this would be the first of many years that I would spend in the middle east. On October 30, 2008, my wife and I were married in Savannah, Georgia, just two days before I left for my second deployment with the Army. We spent the entire first year of our marriage apart, except for my two weeks of leave. After returning home, I enrolled in the Navarro College Fire Academy and completed the Emergency Medical Technician – Basic program immediately after. However, I wasn't destined to be home for good yet, and took employment for a security company providing diplomatic security at the US Embassy in Baghdad in 2010. Aside from a two-year break beginning in 2013 after my daughter was born, I worked at the Baghdad embassy until May 2022 when I finally called it quits, this time for good, to pursue a new career. This new career would need to provide me with the sense of purpose and honor that I had grown accustomed to, but also allow me to be at home with my family and watch my children grow up. After seeing my wife complete the Navarro ADN program and embark on a rewarding career as

a Registered Nurse (RN), the decision was too easy. So, I began the process of becoming an RN, through the tried-and-true educational institution in my hometown, Navarro College.

From registration to graduation, Navarro College has a streamlined administrative process that allowed a smooth transition from the workforce into student life. I was able to complete all my ADN prerequisites online while I still worked in Baghdad, alleviating a large amount of stress relating to the transition into student life at the age of 38. In doing so, I managed to obtain the Pre-Bachelor in Nursing A.S. degree one month prior to beginning the ADN program. The Navarro ADN program and staff have been amazing, and I am extremely privileged to follow in my wife's footsteps and learn from the wonderful and knowledgeable nurses that Navarro has employed. The program has provided me with the foundation and skills to become an RN, while instructors have also been successful in imprinting upon me a sense of compassion and caring that I never knew was possible. Lets face it, nursing is pretty much the opposite of my previous endeavors and requires a completely new mindset. As a student nurse, I have been able to learn at many different clinical sites where I have practiced and honed my nursing skills, also while representing Navarro College proudly.

Now, with graduation just 68 days away, my fellow classmates and I are already interviewing for residency programs throughout the Dallas/Ft. Worth area at some of the busiest and most respected hospitals in Texas. A nurse residency is an educational program within the hospital that builds upon the knowledge we have learned at the Navarro ADN program and focuses on the specialty that we have joined, such as the Intensive Care Unit or Emergency Department. I have no doubt that my classmates and I will be that much better having received our education from the Navarro College ADN program.

Navarro College has become home to others in my family as well, such as my sister-in-law. She completed the Navarro Licensed Vocational Nursing program in August of 2023 and has just been accepted into the Navarro LVN to RN bridge program. Furthermore, my two oldest children, twin girls that will be graduating in May 2024 from high school, are both already registered for Navarro's Pre-Bachelor of Nursing degree to begin their prerequisites. Not only has Navarro College itself made a lasting, generational impression on my family, but so has the ADN program. These are great examples of the positive impact that Navarro has and will have on their futures and on mine. My future will always be brighter when my children and loved ones have obtained educations that lead to honorable, fulfilling careers. Careers made possible by the hard work and dedication of the Navarro College staff, from administrators to instructors, to ensure that their students receive the best education they can provide.

For me, Navarro College has provided great opportunities for my own personal and professional development. I began the ADN program at 38 years old and will be finishing at 40 years young, ready to begin a new career with a head full of knowledge and a refreshed outlook on the future. The possibilities are limitless within the nursing field. I will always be able to find employment. If I decide I do not like the specialty I am in, there are many more to choose from. Most importantly, I will have a career that my family and I can be proud of and continue with my lifelong tradition of conducting honorable work in service to others. While it is admittedly quite different from my military and para-military life, there is still a familiarity that makes me feel good about the future. A future made possible by the men and women at Navarro College that have dedicated their lives to providing a quality education in an inclusive, welcoming environment full of Bulldog Pride.