

Autumn 2021

**02**

VUB Director Shares  
Support Resources

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Semester Tips for  
Starting Off Strong

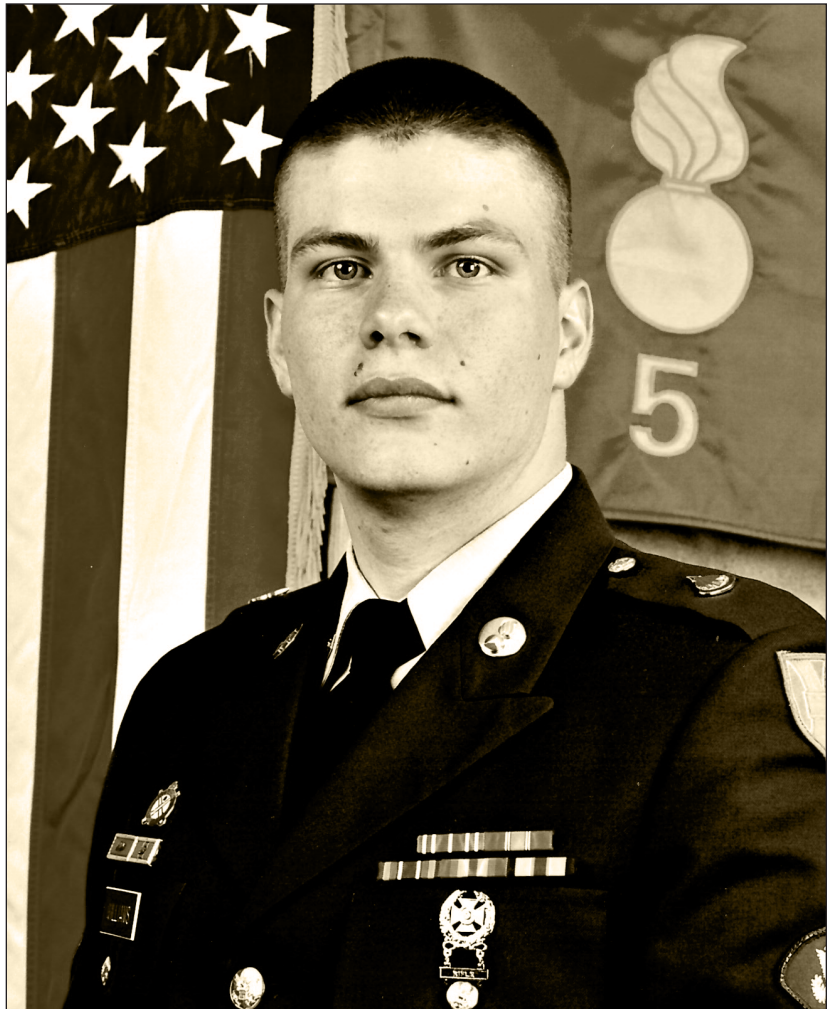
**04**

VUB Participants  
Learn Bonsai

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**Army Veteran  
Continues to  
Serve Others**



# DIRECTOR'S CORNER

## Welcome Back VUB Peeps!

It's been awhile since we have published a newsletter! We have seen some changes of our own at VUB with staffing. In November, George joined as our Adult Education Coordinator. George is a retired Army veteran who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Then we gained Joshua in April as Outreach Coordinator. Joshua served in the Marine Reserves and utilized TRIO programs as he earned his degree.

He is also the responsible for receiving our newsletter (thanks, Joshua!). Just recently, in June, Katie joined us as our Advising Coordinator. Katie has a background in higher education, making her an excellent resource to help you



**Michelle Ciesielski**  
Director

navigate this tough environment.

While going back to school is challenging, there are support systems at every college to help you be successful. There are two major resources as you start your semester that often fly under the radar. Reach out to them EARLY and often.

### Disability Support Services (DSS)

Almost every veteran we work with qualifies for accommodations in one way or another. DSS offices work with students to give them the tools to be successful in their classes. These accommodations are highly individualized examples of accommodations for some include a guaranteed seat in the back (or front) of the room, extra time on tests or assignments, a note-taker, or taking your tests in a quieter environment. I have seen many veterans skip using this resource and it always ends the same: The end of the semester arrives as they struggle to stay afloat in all their classes while the pressures

of finals come upon them. Act on your accommodations early. These are a safety valve – relieving some of the pressure so you can continue to function and achieve success in school until the very end.

### Counseling Services

It is common for colleges to employ licensed counselors for their students on campus. Being a veteran student carries many stressors, even more than some other students may have. Adding the pressures and expectations of school on top of family responsibilities, holding a job and financial responsibilities, and transitioning to civilian life, veterans may feel overwhelmed and lost. If you are feeling this, this is normal and you are not alone. Talking with a counselor will help process your experiences and feelings while better equipping

you for success. If you have tried counseling and haven't found it useful, give it another shot. Finding a counselor that is a good match takes time and is worth the effort. The Vet Center in Springfield another resource for veterans with PTSD, combat-trauma, and/or sexual assault trauma. Their phone number is (417) 891-4988. Your mental health is crucial to reaching your goals and educational success.

As always, Veterans Upward Bound staff and tutors are also here to help you navigate college and talk about your options. Please utilize us as a resource and check in with us often! We are here to make sure your first semester back is a smooth one.

**“While going back to school is challenging, there are support systems at every college to help you be successful.”**



## SUCCESS SKILLS

### Tips and Tricks for the New Semester

Hello Everyone!

My name is Katie Patrick and I am the new Advising Coordinator for VUB! I am so excited to work with you all and support you through your transition to college! As the semester begins, I want to point out some important events and share some tips and tricks to start the year off strong.

The first week of school is an incredibly important time to get yourself organized. Stop by our

events for Syllabus Week as we focus on organization and navigating Canvas. Make sure to print off all your syllabi and find all the due dates for your tests and assignments. Writing these all in your planner will help you stay organized and manage your time. Don't have a planner? No worries! Stop by the VUB Lab for a free planner and school supplies!

Also, don't forget to schedule time for yourself! Between school, work, family, friends, and

everything in-between, you deserve to have some scheduled relaxation time. Looking for some self-care suggestions? Join us for our self-care workshop this semester!



**Katie Patrick**  
Advising Coordinator

of my favorite study methods is the Pomodoro Method. This method is also called the 25-5 method. Study hard for 25 minutes, this means no phone, no distractions, just studying for 25 minutes! Then, take 5 minutes for a break. Use this time to move around, grab a snack, and drink some water! This method helps students stay focused and improve productivity. Give it a try today!

Good luck this semester. You got this!

### My Favorite Quote:

“Don't wait until you have reached your goal to be proud of yourself. Be proud of every step you take toward reaching that goal!”



Above: From left to right; Merrilee Kohout (tutor), Gary Obert (participant), Chris Cox (Bonsai Guy Owner), Joshua Boley (Outreach Coordinator), Joey Rossetto (participant), Jay Lyczkowski (participant) hold up their completed bonsai trees.

Below: Chris Cox and Jay Lyczkowski share military stories as participants work on their bonsai trees.



## BONSAI FOR VETERANS

### Creating Living Art is Therapeutic

Participants in Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) attended a workshop on June 25 to learn how the art of bonsai can help relieve stress. The group listened as Bonsai Guy owner, Chris Cox, explained how he started bonsai as a way to relieve stress in his own life. Next, Chris guided the participants to find bonsai tree hiding in their own mountain pine.

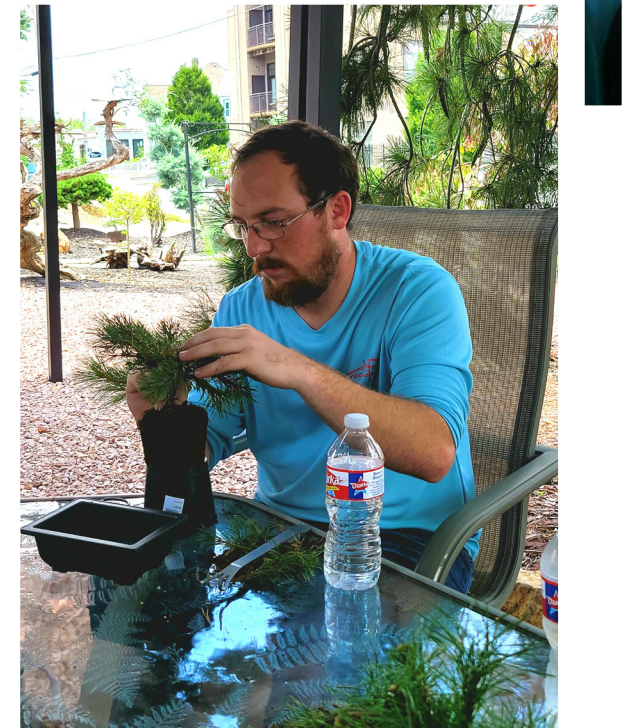
photos and story by Joshua Boley



Above: Each participant transformed a small mountain pine into a bonsai tree and learned how the art of bonsai can be used to overcome stress and depression.

Top Right: Joey Rossetto uses several methods such as cutting, plucking, and wire shaping to help his tree take its desired shape.

Bottom Right: Gary Obert begins making the first of several decisions that will lead to his completed bonsai tree.



# ARMY VETERAN STILL SERVING

## Student Veteran President Helps Veterans with His Charity

Jason Williams is not the type of person to let adversity stand in the way of serving others. In fact, it may be that adversity which pushed him to help others.

Jason joined the United States Army in the spring of 2003 and served nearly five years as a mechanic. He was separated from the military due to injuries he sustained while on duty. After his discharge he remained in Europe, where he had been stationed, for another five years working for Bosch.

Eventually, complications from Jason's injury became so bad he could no longer walk. Like many injured veterans, he began working with Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for treatment options and equipment that could help him. "I ended up having to go file a claim and go through a *little* VA process which was dramatic," said Jason. "My entire experience with that is what led to the creation of my charity."



photo courtesy of Jason Williams  
Jason Williams served in the United States Army for five years.

Jason created the nonprofit organization, The House of Frog Corporation, after hearing stories from other veterans that had similar struggles with the VA and VHA. "There is a lot of bureaucracy behind the approval of purchasing certain items and that

leaves a lot of veterans without," said Jason.

While working with the VHA, Jason's doctor approved him for additional medical equipment that could help improve his mobility and quality of life. After completing the referral process and test fittings for the new equipment Jason was shocked to learn he was ultimately denied by another department. Jason's doctor again approved him for additional medical equipment, this time in the form of a power wheelchair. Again, while waiting for the new equipment Jason learned he was again denied.



**Joshua Boley**  
Outreach Coordinator

After being denied twice Jason learned he could appeal the decision. He won his appeal and an order was placed for his power wheelchair. "It's a form of checks and balances," said Jason. "But, what happens is certain individuals end up going without based on a panel of people that never met you and don't know you."

After his struggles with the VHA Jason began researching laws and regulations and decided to start his nonprofit as a resource for other veterans that may have similar issues. While the website [thehomefrog.com](http://thehomefrog.com) is up as a resource for veterans, Jason said his ultimate goal is to be contracted through the VA as an official resource.

"The goal is if a doctor calls our number and says 'Hey House of Frog representative, I have a patient here that has been denied can you help them out,' that we will be ready," said Jason.



photo courtesy of Jason Williams  
Jason Williams currently lives in Springfield, MO and attends classes at Ozarks Technical Community College.

Jason's drive to help veterans extended past his own charity when he began taking classes at OTC for digital drafting and design and became the interim president of the Student Veterans Organization. "I found out that the school had an SVO and I wanted to be a part of it," said Jason.

Not only is Jason the interim president of the SVO, he is currently the only member of the organization. Unfortunately, that membership diminished during the COVID 19 crisis, but he hopes to grow membership and involvement in the organization. "In my mind there is no reason why anybody shouldn't try to get something that important back up on its feet," said Jason.

Jason also currently works as a VA work study, assisting the Veterans Services office at OTC.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### AUGUST

- 23-27 Syllabus Week
- 23rd - Time Management and Organization #1  
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- 24th - Refresher Courses  
All Day Event
- 25th - Canvas Training  
10 a.m. to 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- 26th - Time Management and Organization #2  
3 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- 30th - Book Club (Atomic Habits)  
11 a.m.

### SEPTEMBER

- 1st - OTC Scholarship Workshop  
9 a.m. to 10 a.m. & 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- 9th - Creative Writing  
9 a.m. to 10 a.m. & 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- 21st - Let's Get Craftin'  
10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

### OCTOBER

- 4th - FASFA Filing Day  
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- 19th - MSU Recon Trip  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- 25th - OTC Spring Registration Day  
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- 25th - Book Club (Can't Hurt Me)  
11 a.m.

For more information about Jason's nonprofit visit [thehomefrog.com](http://thehomefrog.com)

If you are a veteran currently attending OTC and would like to be a part of the Student Veteran Organization a sign-up list can be found in the Veterans Upward Bound computer lab located in Information Commons West room 217.

# MEET OUR TUTORS



**Linda Rhodes**

**Math Tutor**

Linda is a former educator with many years of experience. She has a passion for helping others succeed and readily available to assist you with your college work! She is also in charge of our Math Refresher course to help you get ready for that coming math class.



**Travis Brown**  
**Business, English**  
**and Math Tutor**

Travis is a United States Marine veteran with experience in a variety of math related subjects as well as English and business-related courses. Nearing the completion of his bachelor's degree in supply chain management he is passionate about assisting veterans just like you.



**Ben Fiene**

**Math Tutor**

Ben is a certified math teacher for the state of Missouri in grades 9 -12. He has over eight years of experience in tutoring from 5th grade through calculus. He is also a Navy veteran who served on board the USS Nimitz from 1995 to 1998.

## THE BRIEFING

The Briefing is a quarterly newsletter published by Veterans Upward Bound in Springfield, Mo.

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a federally funded grant program helping veterans on their path to higher education. We do this by offering; academic and career planning, financial aid and benefit advising, tutoring, admissions assistance, and community resources. All services from VUB are free to veterans who qualify. While our offices are located at

OTC, we are able to help veterans with a Greene County address, regardless of where they want to attend college.

online:  
email:

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[vub@otc.edu](mailto:vub@otc.edu)



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## VETERANS UPWARD BOUND STAFF

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Linda Rhodes  
Ben Fiene  
Travis Brown

Instuctor & Tutor  
Tutor  
Tutor