



Tressa Ashworth and her daughter say goodbye to their husband and father (left) as he prepares to leave for an 18-month deployment to Afghanistan. In the photo above, they greet him upon his return. While her husband was away, Ashworth took advantage of the Spouses to Teachers program and began working toward a degree in elementary education.

## Spouses to Teachers helps busy military wife pursue her higher education goals

By Tessa Ashworth

Life as a military spouse is not always easy, and it sometimes requires us to put our dreams on hold to support our spouses' military careers. While pregnant with my first child, I had many hopes and dreams for how my husband and I would share the first years, smiles, steps and words of our little girl. When our daughter was two weeks old, I found out I would be witnessing those milestones alone. My husband told me that he would be deploying to Afghanistan within the next two months and that his tour would be 15 months long.

As a strong military wife, I replied that I would be okay and that we would make it work. I needed something to fill the time, so I decided to take some college classes and work towards becoming an elementary school teacher. I started taking some classes through a local distance education program and completed my associate degree in August at Utah State University just before my husband returned from Afghanistan.

### Homecoming

Our daughter was now 18 months old and I wanted to be able to stay home with her and enjoy our time together as a family, since we had spent the previous 15 months apart. I decided the time was right to continue my

education and work towards attaining my bachelor's degree because my husband could help care for our daughter.

I chose Western Governors University because of the flexibility it afforded me in pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Because I would be relying solely on my husband's military income so I could stay home with our little girl, I needed to find a way to help pay for my education. I applied for the WGU Spouses to Teacher's Supplemental

Scholarship and was awarded a \$1,500 grant.

My husband works for the Utah Army National Guard. He works about an hour away from where we live, so he is gone before my daughter and I get up.

I try to devote my mornings to spending time with my daughter, and when she takes a nap, I really try to make

the most of that time doing schoolwork.

My husband works four 10-hour shifts, so he is home on Fridays to take care of my daughter.

He is always encouraging me devote the entire day to studying and supporting my goals.

If something comes up and I need to spend extra time with my daughter, I won't be late for class and I can always make up the time at a later date.

I also can plan ahead if we want to take a family vacation and accomplish two weeks of work in one, so that I can enjoy our time together.