

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Christina Crook BSW, Bachelors in Social Work



Cristina Crook and Kentucky Congressman Brett Guthrie

What are your plans post college?

After I get my MSW, I plan to work within the military community to help with the continuity of care issue. So many social workers leave and service members and their families must start all over with someone new. It can have a devastating negative effect on the clients and their treatment process. I hope to be able to alleviate that stress for at least few clients.

What is the Hidden Heroes campaign and how did you get involved?

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation along with Campaign Chair, Tom Hanks and Hidden Heroes Ambassadors, Tom Brokaw and Ryan Phillippe, launched The Hidden Heroes campaign on September 27, 2016. The campaign is aimed at bringing military and Veteran caregivers off the sidelines and raising awareness for the issues that are specific for caregivers.

The website, HiddenHeroes.org provides a place for caregivers around the world to sign up and can locate not only vetted resources but also a support system of caregivers that are located near them. This is important because many caregivers feel very isolated and don't realize how many others have the same or similar stories.

Many different organizations and businesses like USAA, The Independence Fund, American Airlines, Amazon, the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, just to name a few, have jumped on board with Hidden Heroes and are providing many different resources, ranging from financial support,

Why did you choose this major?

I am a Social Work Major with a minor in Clinical and Community Behavioral Health. I was a Psychology major in the beginning of my college career but shortly after becoming my husband's full-time caregiver in 2013, I had to start interacting more with different social workers who assisted with my husband's care. I quickly came to realize that my true calling was within Social Work.



Cristina Crook and Mrs. Elizabeth Dole

legal and financial education, caregiver libraries and many more. We are currently asking different cities to sign up to be a Hidden Heroes Cities. Currently, there are over 50 cities that have committed to becoming a military caregiver friendly city that will assess and address specific needs of the caregiving community within that city. When I was offered the Fellowship within the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, I became an active advocate for the Hidden Heroes campaign.

What is your role as an advocate for KY Military and Veteran caregivers?

I am the Kentucky Dole Fellow Class of 2016-2017. My role within this amazing organization is to advocate on behalf of Kentucky's military and Veteran caregivers. Just this past September, I flew to DC with many other Dole Fellows from around the nation and we "stormed" Capitol Hill. I had meeting with some of our state's elected officials to ask for their support of certain bills that are currently going through the House and the Senate. I also attempted to persuade them to join the Hidden Heroes Congressional caucus co-chaired by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senator John McCain, Senator Jack Reed, and Congressman Jeff Miller.



Cristina Crook and Mr. Brett King, former Military LA

Share a little about the Today Show taping!

On the launch day of the Hidden Heroes campaign, The Today Show did a live segment with Tom Hanks, Senator Elizabeth Dole and Dole Fellow Alumni Jessica Allen. Senator Dole, myself, along with 50+ other Fellows from across the nation in both New York & Washington DC. A full recording of it can be found on YouTube under Hidden Heroes Launch.

Do you have words of wisdom for other students, etc. , any more information about the Hidden Heroes campaign, etc.

Military caregivers are everywhere. They are your neighbors, your students, even your bank tellers. Chances are, you have already met a Hidden Hero and didn't even realize it. We have sacrificed much of our lives to provide care for those whose war came home with them and although we do so without hesitation, at times, we need support. We are a special community that faces many unique issues. As a full time caregiver and student, I not only work on my own studies but also assist my husband and children with theirs.

How do you juggle school and caregiving?

Earlier on in my decision to go back to school, I found that I had to stay ahead of my studies because emergencies always came up. Sometimes juggling all my different hats that I wear gets overwhelming but I wouldn't give up any of them and am so grateful for the tremendous amount of support I have gotten from friends, family and my fellow caregivers!