



Lauren Clodfelter is from Mount Juliet Tennessee and after 3 semesters at MTSU, she made the selfless decision to put college on hold to serve her county. “My parents always encouraged me, their southern belle, to go to college after high school but after 3 semesters, I didn’t have a clear direction where I wanted my life to go, but I knew I wanted to serve my county.” In 2009, Lauren joined the U.S. Army.

While on active duty, Lauren was a Squad Leader assigned to the 82 Airborne Division, 2 Battalion, 504 Parachute Infantry Regiment (AIRBORNE) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This is the same unit that earned its glory by jumping into combat in Italy and The Netherlands during World War II. During her military career Lauren deployed in support of Operation New Dawn in Ramadi, Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom in Kandahar, Afghanistan. When she wasn’t deployed or jumping out of airplanes with America’s premier Airborne fighting force, Lauren became the Squad Distinguished Marksman, Unit Prevention Leader, and graduated special operations language training for Dari (a dialect of Persian spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan). Currently, Lauren is serving in the Tennessee National Guard as a 91L – Construction Equipment Repairer.



When asked what Lauren loved most about serving, she said “I love the sense of brother/sisterhood you find in the military. During my time on active duty, it was nice to know at the end of each day, you may not like some of the people you worked with but you always knew they had your back and you had theirs. It really was like a big family regardless of race, gender or creed.”

As a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and leader of soldiers, Lauren has seen her fair share of challenges in terms of respect. Lauren takes pride in knowing she is fulfilling her responsibilities as an NCO when her fellow soldiers thank her for being an excellent leader and that they look up to her. Lauren has taken her military experience and applied those skills during her return to civilian life and starting back at MTSU. “I’ve learned a lot of valuable lessons including punctuality, being accountable for your own actions, and confidence. Having to make decisions while serving also made me learn that it’s okay to take chances in life to better myself or others.”

Now as a Concrete Industry Management student, Lauren is finding that being a part of such a tight-knit program is helping her transition from being a full-time soldier to a full-time student. “Not only are you close with all of your classmates, but the faculty does a great job getting to know each student’s strengths and weaknesses while maintaining a professional relationship.” Lauren appreciates how the alumni and industry folks recognize the importance of being involved in the CIM program and give students an unlimited amount of people to reach out to when in need of help or advice. “You won’t find that in any other program at MTSU.”

Being a female in a male industry isn’t new territory for Lauren. “I’m used to being in a male dominated environment but I think we have an extra chance to stand out in this program.” Lauren is keeping her options open in deciding which avenue to take with her concrete degree. She can see herself dispatching at a ready-mix plant or working in construction, but isn’t closing the door on sales as she enjoys maintaining professional relationships with others. Whatever path Lauren chooses, the scholarship money has helped her maintain focus towards that path by easing daily financial burdens a non-traditional student and single mother faces. “This scholarship has really allowed me to focus on my academics and reach my full potential as a student.”