



Neil Vigil was a medic and Blackhawk helicopter pilot in the Army. He is now studying medicine. PHOTO COURTESY NEIL VIGIL

Glendale medical student is 2018 Tillman Scholar

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Neil Vigil, a second-year medical student at the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix, has been named a 2018 Tillman Scholar.

“It’s incredibly humbling to be among those selected as a Tillman Scholar,” Vigil said. “I believe that veterans have the skills, ability and values to make significant and lasting contributions to our communities. The program will allow me to connect with and support like-minded veterans as we tackle tough challenges in our community. The Pat Tillman Foundation says that they believe our best years of service to our country are still ahead of us and I couldn’t agree more.”

The Pat Tillman Foundation recognizes 60 scholars each year for their service, leadership and potential. The 2018 class will receive more than \$1.3 million in scholarships to pursue higher education and continue their service in the fields of medicine, law, business, policy, technology, education and arts.

The foundation has invested more than \$16 million in academic support and named more than 580 Tillman Scholars from 100 academic institutions nationwide. A former Arizona Cardinals football player, Pat Tillman served with the 75th Ranger Regiment in Afghanistan. He was killed in April 2004.

Vigil enlisted in the Army as a medic after high school. He entered active duty

in the spring of 2004 and served as a medic until he was selected to attend the United States Military Academy from 2006 to 2010. In May 2010, he was commissioned as an aviation officer and entered flight training at Fort Rucker, Alabama. After flight school, he was stationed in Katterbach, Germany, as a Blackhawk helicopter pilot and company executive officer.

“My time as an Army medic was my first experience in the medical field and the foundation for my desire to become a physician,” he said. “Serving as an infantry platoon medic taught me the importance of trust between provider and patient. My soldiers never mentioned any health issues in public, but it was my job as their medic to develop trust and communication to provide the care they needed.”

Vigil lives in Glendale with his wife, Courtney, and their two children, Savannah and Connor. Although medical school is challenging, Vigil said the support of his family keeps him motivated.

His favorite experience so far has been working on his scholarly project with his mentor, Dr. Ben Bobrow. Bobrow and Vigil are working on a state-wide analysis of suicide among EMS professionals compared with the general public. Additionally, they’re working on exploring the effectiveness of resiliency training for EMTs and firefighters.

Teresa Joseph is a public affairs coordinator for UA College of Medicine-Phoenix.