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Two UCM Nursing Graduates Honored with Challenge Coin for Military Service

WARRENSBURG, MO (June 9, 2014) – Respect, dignity and determination are three words that veterans Steven Tyree and Cory Philp take to heart, especially after being honored for their military service during their recent graduation from the University of Central Missouri nursing program.

The two received metal challenge coins funded through the UCM Foundation Opportunity Grant “to advance the university’s standing as a military-friendly university and to highlight the Department of Nursing’s veterans admission policy and academic support,” according to Karin Sartwell, the assistant nursing professor who applied for the grant.

For Tyree, the coin “is a great honor as it showcases what I have accomplished here at UCM.” As a student at Warrensburg High School, he took basic training during his summers. After graduation, he became an Army LPN, then served at Fort Sam Houston, Fort Bliss and Fort Polk. He also had a 15-month tour in Baghdad with the 115th Combat Support Hospital where he worked in a detainee operation, an intensive care unit and “out in the wire.” Back in the U.S., he worked in an immunization clinic until he left the military in 2010 with the rank of specialist. In 2010, he also started the UCM nursing program.

“I became a nurse because I received good advice from my drill sergeant. He was an ex-special forces medic who had experienced every theater of war for the past 20 years and when someone with his accolades tells you to do something, it sticks. So I became a nurse. It’s one of the best decisions I have ever made and have never doubted,” Tyree said. “UCM’s nursing program helped me reach my potential and showed me what it is to be a registered nurse with a BSN.” His career plan is to work in the emergency room or intensive care unit.

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For Cory Philp, the coin represents appreciation for all his hard work to become a registered nurse. He has been with the U.S. Air Force 11 years, including five years at Langley AFB and three years at Whiteman. His area is diet therapy providing nutrition support and education to hospital patients. At Whiteman, he provided health promotion activities as well as fitness and tobacco cessation classes. He continues to work as a diet therapist with the 442\textsuperscript{nd} medical squadron out of Whiteman.

“UCM has been a great experience for me,” said Philp. “All of the nursing staff are so knowledgeable and helpful and always available when you need assistance. I feel that they provided me with the knowledge to be confident and successful in the nursing profession.” His plans are to get a year or two of experience and then pursue graduate work. Philp’s wife, Karen, also graduated from UCM’s nursing program and is currently a labor and delivery nurse.

To date, the nursing department has awarded 10 challenge coins. One side shows the UCM nursing emblem while the other side shows the U.S. flag and the words: respect, dignity and determination. The coin’s development was part of the university’s commitment to provide greater learning opportunities for military and veteran students.

Offering these types of greater learning experiences is the goal of the UCM Foundation Opportunity Grants. In fiscal year 2014, the grants started a campus food pantry, launched international service learning projects, added new technology to several academic programs, aided faculty research, and more. This activity is in keeping with the UCM Foundation’s mission. The nonprofit arm of the university raises private support to make UCM more affordable, accessible and beneficial for students.

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University of Central Missouri nursing department chair Julie Clawson, center, presents veteran nursing graduates Steve Tyree, left, and Cory Philp, right, with challenge coins in honor of their military service.