The new KU Student Veteran Center opened its doors Jan. 17, coinciding with the start of the spring semester. The nearly 3,000-square-foot center, located on the third floor of Summerfield Hall (Room 345), has been undergoing major renovations since May 2016. The space serves as a centralized resource for KU’s military-affiliated students, who will be able to get information and turn in VA benefits paperwork. They now have opportunities to meet and network with fellow student veterans and will also find available University, area and VA resources.

Our goal is to assist them across all phases of their student career—from pre-admission counseling and first-year learning success to retention, graduation and life beyond the University as alumni.

The center features a lounge that includes computers with Common Access Card readers for military students, a tutoring and study area, meeting and conference rooms, and a break room with free coffee.

The KU Student Veterans of America headquarters is located in the center, as is the office of Student Veteran Center director April Blackmon Strange. Three other offices are available for various support services to meet with students. KU Legal Student Services, for example, has already agreed to have office hours in the center on a recurring basis.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs (KCVA) area representative moved into one of the offices for the foreseeable future. The KCVA helps Kansas veterans and eligible dependents on everything from filing VA claims for medical, education and other benefits, to obtaining earned military awards.

The Student Veteran Center would not be possible without the generous support of KU alumni and community members. Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen!

Support for center operations is an ongoing need. To learn more, contact April Blackmon Strange at abblackmon@ku.edu.
Nine Wounded Warrior scholarships awarded for 2016-'17

The KU Wounded Warrior Scholarship (WWS) has grown from two recipients in 2012 to nine for the 2016-'17 academic year. This scholarship helps qualified veterans and their family members in meeting the financial challenges of pursuing their education at KU. Qualified servicemembers, veterans, primary caregivers and surviving spouses/children currently enrolled or admitted to KU are eligible to apply. The awards are for $5,000 to $10,000 a year and are renewable for up to four years. The 2016-'17 academic year recipients are:

- **Matthew Battilossi**, JD student, Army veteran, received the KU WWS.
- **Joshua Blake**, freshman in architecture, Marine Corps veteran, received the Keener Foundation WWS.
- **Luke Dercher**, senior in computer science, Navy veteran, received the KU WWS.
- **Arnold Dinh**, freshman in biology, Marine Corps veteran, received the Heart of America Patriot Foundation WWS and the Delbert Morel Family WWS.
- **Tim Hortak**, PhD student therapeutic sciences, Army veteran, received the Bill and Shanithi Eckert WKS and KU WWS.
- **Mackenzie Istook**, sophomore in visual art, father Army, received the Heart of America Patriot Foundation WWS.
- **Corey Lacej**, junior in health, sports and exercise science, Army veteran, received the KAMO Adventures WWS and the Paul & Donna Petersen WWS.
- **Adrian Lajano**, senior in communications, Army veteran, received the KU WWS.
- **Donald Spradling**, graduate student in civil engineering, Navy veteran, received the KU WWS.

These scholarships are provided through the contributions of many generous donors. For more information, please visit kuendowment.org/woundedwarriors.

Veterans Alumni Network

Senior Advisory Board

- U.S. Sen. Robert J. Dole, Army, Honorary Board Chairman.
- Maj. Gen. Frank E. Miller, USA (Ret.), President.
- Maj. Gen. David M. Perkins, USA (Ret.), Vice President.
- Lt. Col. Tim Harned, USA (Ret.), Secretary.

Three Green Berets from 5th Special Forces Group were killed Nov. 4 in Jordan. The Fort Campbell, Kentucky-based soldiers—Staff Sgt. Matthew Lewellen, Staff Sgt. Kevin McEneave and Staff Sgt. James Mastbury—died after they reportedly came under fire while entering a Jordanian military base.

Lewellen, 27, of Kirkville, Missouri, had more than six years of service and was a KU alumnus. He joined the Army in February 2011, graduating from the Special Forces training in November 2012. After a 2014 deployment to Afghanistan, Lewellen was stationed in Jordan when he was killed, according to his family. Lewellen, the second son of three children and husband to Renee Laue, was a standout high school athlete who was enrolled at the University of Kansas when he decided to serve his country, his family said in a statement. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Overseas Service Ribbon and the NATO Medal.

Lewellen was honored by KU with a moment of silence at the Salute to Service game Nov. 12.

Information courtesy of Army Times

Vets make it Count with Books scholarship

On Aug. 6, 2011, Army Spc. Spencer C. Duncan was killed when his Chinook was shot down in Afghanistan. The Olathe native was just 21 years old. To honor his memory, Spencer’s parents, Megan and Dale, founded the Spencer C. Duncan Make It Count Foundation.

KU is fortunate to be among the many recipients of the foundation’s generosity. The foundation has designated funds to offer $8,500 scholarships ($500 per semester) to help offset the costs of textbooks for deserving student-veterans.

Congratulations to the following KU student-veterans who received 2016 scholarships:

- **Danielle Kerr**, pharmacy student
- **Luis Noble**, senior, business marketing
- **Aiden Canady**, sophomore, civil engineering
- **Isaac Remboldt**, senior, environmental science
- **Godfrey Kiru**, freshman, aerospace engineering
- **Henry Falcon**, graduate student, supply chain management
- **Matthew Battilossi**, JD student
- **Matthew C. Stratham**, MD student
- **Mary Williams-Touch**, junior, clinical lab sciences/pre-med

Three scholarships are offered:

1. The LTC is also engaged with active duty personnel in language-coded billets. 2. The LTC is also engaged with active duty units offering classes for the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth. The courses are offered as part of the CGCSS curriculum and include introductory classes in German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish, as well as Intermediate-German and Italian. Outside of the local area, the Center provides language training to the Air Force’s 418th MNAS at McGuire AFB, New Jersey and the 571st MNAS at Travis AFB, California.

KU Language Training Center update

Now in its fourth year, the KU Language Training Center (LTC) is a collaborative initiative to develop expertise in critical languages, cultures and strategic regions for DoD personnel. The LTC has three key initiatives:

1. The Center offers intensive, two-week summer language programs for members of the U.S. Army Reserve, Army National Guard and any other qualified military personnel. During these programs, students live on campus in an immersive environment where they are expected to speak the target language for the entirety of their program. Structured classroom instruction is supplemented with daily language tables and extracurricular activities coordinated by native speakers of the language.

KU expanding reach to CGSC students at Fort Leavenworth

This past fall the University of Kansas set out on a course to further expand its reach to support the men and women attending the Army’s Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth.

KU is committed to engaging the U.S. Armed Forces as strategic partners, especially the Army at Fort Leavenworth. The University’s mission is to prepare Officers and Officers from sitting alongside Soldiers and accordingly our Soldiers benefit from a civilian KU education. The Soldiers who attend CGSC today will be our Army’s senior leaders in a decade. In just a few years, these young majors will be at the forefront of decision-making which have national-level effects. We truly have an opportunity to positively influence our future national security.

In the spirit of this vision and commitment, KU launched new programs in Leavenworth, including a Master of Science in Project Management and a Graduate Certificate in Environmental Assessment. These new programs complement the two master’s degrees the University of Kansas has offered on Fort Leavenworth: a Master of Science in Business in Supply Chain Management and Logistics, and a Master of Arts in Global & International Studies (Ex-Terminus). Moreover, KU is now exploring a bold initiative to establish a physical presence in the City of Leavenworth, immediately adjacent to the installation. This physical presence will provide KU the opportunity to increase the breadth and depth of our educational programming for students at CGSC, while also serving the local and regional communities.

Programming for fall 2017 is planned to include:

- A Master of Science in Business and Organization Leadership;
- A Master of Science in Homeland Security, Law and Policy; and
- A Professional Science Master’s in Environmental Assessment.

This initiative provides a viable example of how KU is strategically moving to become the US Army’s civilian university of choice. Prospective donors who want to support this initiative should contact Nancy Hunter, Director of Graduate Military Programs, at gjm@kumc.edu.
In honor of Veterans Day, the University of Kansas hosted a variety of events Nov. 9 through Nov. 13. Events included:

- A free breakfast for KU student-veterans and nontraditional students;
- A dance workshop with Avis Dance Company, a mixed-ability dance company that featured a story of veterans’ resilience in their Nov. 9 performance;
- Celebrations of the Marine Corps’ 241st birthday on campus;
- The annual KU Salute to Service football game;
- The fifth annual KU Veterans Day 5K; and
- A tribute to veterans USO-style event at the Dole Institute of Politics.

KU SVA members help celebrate the Marine Corps’ birthday with free cake for students.

5th-annual Veterans Day 5K event a record success

A record 329 participants signed up for the KU Veterans Day Run, which honed Veterans Vietnam Veterans this year. New in 2016, KU offered a “virtual run” option, allowing anyone to complete the race on their own time—in their own town—and still earn a shirt and finisher’s medal.

We’d like to thank the following sponsors for their support of the KU Veterans Day Run:

- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- KU Student Involvement Leadership Center
- Wichita Energy
- Heinbach Larkin DDS
- Standard Grooming Supply
- Ad Astra Running Company
- Stephens Real Estate
- Blinds Veteran Association
- Happy Shirts
- MedExpress Urgent Care
- Marine Quality Water
- Warren & Mary Corman We’d also like to thank our partners:

- KU Alumni Association
- KU Student Veteran Center
- KU Student Veterans of America
- KU Veterans Alumni Chapter
- KU Naval, Air Force ROTC
- KU Running Company

The University of Kansas is now a Commemorative Partner with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.

The Commemorative Partner Program is designed for federal, state and local communities, veterans’ organizations and other non-governmental organizations to assist a grateful nation in thanking and honoring our Vietnam Veterans and their families.

Partners are encouraged to participate in the commemoration of the Vietnam War by planning and conducting events or activities that will recognize Vietnam Veterans and their families’ service, valor and sacrifice.

Commemorative Partners must commit to conducting two events or activities each year for which they will receive recognition.

To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.

To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

To support the events of that day, as well as the next 2,239 days, in thanking and honoring our Vietnam Veterans and their families.

During his week-long activities at KU, alumnus, veteran Ryan Sparks returns to campus for Vets Day week

Ron Mastin reflects on time as POW

On Jan. 16, 1967, Air Force Lt. Ron Mastin was flying his F-105 combat mission when his aircraft was shot down northeast of Hanoi, Ron and his front seat, Capt. Tom Storey, were forced to eject over North Vietnam. Fifty years later, Ron still vividly remembers the events of that day, as well as the next 2,239 days, he spent as a prisoner of war in Hanoi, Saigon, and other locales.

As part of its week of Veterans Day events, the Veterans Alumni Network hosted Ryan Sparks (c’97). After graduating from KU with a BA in Political Science, Sparks enlisted in the Marine Corps and served for 16 years. During his final deployment, Sparks was the Commanding Officer of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines during Operation Mostarak in Marjah, Afghanistan, during which he was awarded the Silver Star for valor and featured in the 2010 HBO documentary “The Battle for Marjah.” Sparks’ additional awards include the Bronze Star Medal with Combat Distinquishing Device and two Purple Hearts. In 2011, Sparks was the recipient of the Marine Corps’ prestigious Leatherneck Trophy for courage and outstanding leadership.

Today Sparks is an executive director at JP Morgan Chase in Strategy & Process Improvement. He has also served on the Board of Directors of The Headstrong Project, a nonprofit dedicated to providing cost-free and bureaucracy-free mental health care to Afghanistan and Iraq War veterans. Sparks is a current MBA candidate from the Stern School of Business at New York University.

As of this week, Sparks is the guest of honor for the KU/Army of Lawrence College & University’s birthday celebration at the Dole Institute of Politics. Sparks wrapped up his first trip back to Mount Oread Nov. 12 as a guest of honor for the Salute to Service football game, where he was introduced during pregame ceremonies alongside LTG Michael Lundy, the Commanding General of the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth.

Sparks’ trip to KU was made possible by the outstanding support the Veterans Alumni Network receives from the KU Alumni Association.
**ROTC Corner**

Army ROTC

During their two-day fall field training exercise, Jayhawk Battalion cadets trained at the Fraternal Order of Police right outside of Lawrence. On day one, cadets conducted training on land navigation, radio use and procedures, and patrol base operations. The second day consisted of a physical training session, squad movement tactics and techniques and paintball.

After the exercise, the Ranger Challenge cadets conducted additional training in preparation for the Ranger Challenge competition.

Air Force ROTC

The Flying Jayhawks ran in the 20th annual Air Force Marathon at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, Sept. 17-18. Thirteen cadets ran the full marathon while three finished the half marathon.

The Detachment 280 staff was selected as the Northwest Region Team of the Quarter for three quarters in a row, and Maj. Andrew Robinson was selected as Northwest Region Field Grade Officer of the Quarter for fourth quarter, 2016.

Navy ROTC

The Jayhawk battalion performed their first “Break Out Lab” of the semester Sept. 8.

The Navy midshipmen were instructed on how to use the ship simulator software, a crucial tool in developing excellent Surface Warfare Officers. The Marine Corps midshipmen learned the basics of land navigation, taught by the OCS graduates of the battalion.

**KU Naval ROTC Midshipman killed in car accident**

The University of Kansas lost a Naval ROTC Midshipman over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

Nicholas Andrew Herren, 21, of Alma, Kansas, died Nov. 27 in Johnson County, Kansas, as the result of an automobile accident. Herren was attending KU and was a senior in business finance in supply chain management.

He was the Battalion Executive Officer for the KU Navy (Marine Corps) ROTC. He also served as the president for the Semper Fidelis Society and was a supervisor at the KU Recreation Center. Herren was involved with Habitat for Humanity and The Big Event at KU.

The KU community gathered Dec. 1 to remember Herren at a candlelight vigil at the Campanile Memorial.

**ROTC Corner**

Air Force ROTC

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**KU Student Veterans of America (SVA) update**

A lot of amazing things have been happening for veterans on campus this year. After a successful transition from last year’s leaders, we pulled together a strong executive staff that really took off running:

- President: Masten Masten
- Vice president: Bret Easterling
- Treasurer: Mary Touch
- Secretary: Elyse Blackmon
- Adviser: April Blackmon Strange

We made the full official name change from the KU Collegiate Veterans Association to the KU Student Veterans of America. We also created a new logo which pays homage to our SVA roots and our national SVA ties.

Leaders attended a regional national SVA Leadership Summit in St. Louis in August, and Cadwallader was selected for the national SVA Leadership Conference in Dallas. These conventions provided valuable information and resources for advocating on campus, raising chapter funds, having energetic and sustainable growth, and providing student veterans and their families with tools they need to successfully transition into and through their academic career.

Last summer, we received a $9,822 national SVA-Home Depot Veteran Center Initiative grant, which provided many items for the new center, including a refrigerator and television in the lounge and conference room.

A team of Lawrence Home Depot volunteers helped deliver and set up the items. The original student veteran lounge in the Bursar Union closed last spring before the Union’s demolition. In August, the KU Memorial Union generously offered up space for a similar lounge. They even threw an open house event to showcase it to students.

The SVA also celebrated the Air Force’s birthday with cookies in the lounge and set up on Wescoe Beach for the Navy and Marine Corps birthdays, offering free cake to all students. These events helped us connect with student-veterans and educate the entire campus community on the military and the SVA.

Our main fundraiser for the year was helping secure sponsorships for the annual KU Veterans Day 5K, which was a huge success. We have already seen membership growth almost double what it was seven months ago, and meeting/social event attendance has been improving greatly.

**Q&A with JR Caldwell, VA Work Study student and KU Student Veterans of America president**

What is the VA Work Study Program?

“The VA Work Study program allows eligible VA benefits users the ability to, as you would assume, work and study. We have several positions available. It’s a non-taxable education benefit that pays minimum wage, but since it’s tax-free, it ends up being a little more than minimum wage. There’s also flexible hours for everyone. One stipulation behind VA Work Study is that you have to do work that involves veterans related to whatever organization you choose, whether its the University of Kansas or a government institution. The type of work that you do is anything that disseminates information for veterans or works on behalf of veterans. When the Student Veteran Center opens in January, there’s going to be several more VA Work Study positions available.”

How has the Work Study program impacted your experience at KU?

“I think the Work Study program gave me the opportunity to meet other veterans and work alongside them. It helped me get connected to the institution and some of the people at higher levels in the university. By working with Mike Denning, Randy Masten and April Blackmon Strange, I’ve been able to see what goes on behind the scenes that students don’t normally see on campus. It also creates a kind of Work Study family where we get to really know a lot of people we work with on a daily basis.”

What is the best part of working in the Graduate Military Programs/temporary Student Veteran Center admin office?

“Not only am I just helping people that are just kind of coming into the University itself, it’s every time someone asks a question that I don’t know, I get to learn the answer to that question. Not only does it fulfill my personal desire to help other veterans and new veterans coming into campus, it also makes me more aware of things available for veterans and more educated when it comes to things that are available and things that need to be available.”

What led you to become the SVA president?

“I was sitting in the Graduate Military Programs office one day, and I had all these ideas about how to make the SVA more present and grow. In talking about all of these things I wanted to do, one of my peers, Roy Parker, mentioned to me that SVA elections were coming up soon and that I should run for office.

Initially I didn’t think I would have the time to be able to do it. Gradually, as it got closer and closer to the elections, I found I was constantly trying to do things and advocate for student veterans on campus anyway.

Being a prior platoon sergeant in the Marine Corps, I like letting someone else lead something whenever I’m involved in it. I told them that I would run, and I ended up getting elected with Bret Easterling as our vice president.

Over the summer we worked diligently to establish a strong executive board. I think what really initially brought me to want to be the SVA president was knowing all the different schools I’ve gone to and knowing how difficult it can be to just navigate a new school and how awkward it can be for some people to be much older than the general population. It’s hard to have to explain to people the VA system, which is difficult to understand if you’re a veteran sometimes, let alone explaining it to someone who hasn’t been in the military.

I saw a strong need for people to have someone to do odd questions and advocate for and have that group on campus that if they did want to fall back on, they knew that they had someone there that understood a lot of what they had gone through.”
Hail and Farewell

As in the units we have served in, there comes a time to say goodbye to friends we’ve made along the way. We bid farewell to one of our key KUAA allies, Jacey Krehbiel. Jacey has been a great asset to the KU Veterans Alumni Network since September 2012 and has been an integral part of our committee and board meetings and the annual Veterans Day Run. She was quick to help out whenever and wherever we needed the Alumni Association’s support. Fortunately, Jacey is staying with KUAA to help with its valuable mission.

With every departure comes a new arrival: We are very fortunate to have Michelle Lang make a seamless transition into our network’s primary contact within KUAA. Michelle has been with KUAA for nine years and is a welcome addition to our team. We extend our sincere thanks to both of them for all that they do!

Mark your calendars and join us for the annual KU Veterans Alumni Network End-of-Year and Graduation Reception

Please join KU’s military-affiliated alumni, students, faculty and staff for the annual end-of-year meet and greet. We’ll celebrate our graduating students, present them with honor cords and enjoy refreshments and good company.

All KU alumni with military affiliations—veteran, spouse, dependent, long-time supporter/ally—are welcome to attend. The event is free. Be sure to join the KU Veterans Alumni Network to stay informed on this and other network events. Visit kualumni.net/share/veteransform, call 800-584-2957 or email kualumni@kualumni.org and let us know you’d like to be a part of the Veterans Alumni Network.

April 27
4:30-6:30 p.m.
KU Alumni Association

Meet and greet events occur twice a year: each August right after Hawk Week/the fall semester start and late April just before Stop Day week/the end of the spring semester.