

# Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

## Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

November 2023



## Dr. Ryan Johnston

### United States Air Force

Sponsored by:

Sarah Barton Murphy Chapter, NSDAR

Ryan Johnston was in chiropractic school when he entered the Delayed Enlistment Program following the attacks on September 11, 2001. Arriving at Air Force basic training in March 2002, he earned recognition as an Honor Graduate, an award limited to the top 10% of airmen who demonstrate excellence in all phases of academic and military training. As a C130 Loadmaster, he spent just over a year in specialized aircrew training completing basic loadmaster qualification, water survival, land survival, mission qualification, and airdrop qualification. While in training, he served as Lieutenant of the Royal White Knights Color Guard Special Activities Team. He had the honor of raising the United States Flag during Reveille, lowering the United States Flag during Retreat, and carrying the United States Flag during military parades. Ryan met his future wife Tiana, also a C130 Loadmaster, while in training together. They were both assigned permanent duty stations at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. When they arrived, they joined separate airlift squadrons, already in active deployment rotations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Within a month of arriving at Dyess AFB, the United States entered Operation Iraqi Freedom, increasing the deployment tempo and the demand for qualified aircrew. Ryan and Tiana were quickly deployed to separate locations supporting OEF for their first combat deployment. Before the end of 2003, each had earned their first Air Medal, awarded for meritorious individual achievement while participating in aerial flight during 20 combat missions which were flown into austere mountainous airfields in Afghanistan under threat of hostile fire with minimal navigational aid, at night and in inclement weather.

When they returned to Texas from their first deployment, Ryan and Tiana got engaged. The wedding was held in 2004 at Westover Air Reserve Base and included an Honor Guard ceremony led by Tiana's father Senior Master Sergeant Tom Roe.

Ryan was promoted to the rank of Senior Airman early as part of a "Below the Zone" competition evaluating job performance, leadership, and the whole airman concept. He earned a total of three Air Medals for his service in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to his Air Medals, Ryan was

awarded the Air Force Meritorious Unit Award; the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with valor and double bronze oak leaf cluster; the Air Force Good Conduct Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; the Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with gold frame and triple bronze oak leaf cluster; the Basic Military Training Honor Graduate Ribbon; the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon; and the Air Force Training Ribbon.

During his four-year enlistment, Ryan spent over a year in active combat zones on four separate deployments and accumulated over 1,300 total flight hours on the C130 aircraft. He received specialized training in cargo airdrop rigging and qualified as a Joint Airdrop Inspector. One of the most interesting things he saw while in service was a full-size road grader rigged with parachutes for airdrop from the back of a cargo aircraft. The best advice he received was to approach each challenge like you are trying to set a new personal best. All you can do is your best, but you can do that every time!

While in service, Tiana was injured requiring surgery. Following her surgery, she was honorably discharged under a medical separation. After completing his four-year enlistment, Ryan was honorably discharged and returned to Logan University completing his Doctor of Chiropractic degree in 2009. Ryan and Tiana now homeschool their three boys, teaching them the skills they will need to be successful in life.