

# WTG Achievers

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## About the WTG

*The twenty private, or independent, colleges and universities of Wisconsin operate without taxpayer support, but provide an invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 58,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.*

*The State of Wisconsin created the Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG) in 1965 to help qualified Wisconsin citizens to succeed. Fully one-third of the low-income students who apply for the WTG are turned away every year for lack of funds.*

*Each month WTG Achievers brings you success stories of Wisconsinites for whom the WTG has made a significant difference.*

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Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D.  
President & CEO  
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Editorial Assistant

## Iraq vet uses WTG to follow nursing dream



*Jason Diaz of Cottage Grove, a junior at Edgewood College*

When you think "nursing student," it's entirely possible Jason Diaz wouldn't come to mind. The Cottage Grove native has traveled quite a road

to get to where he is today, one that has challenged him in ways most of us will never experience.

Jason was in the U.S. Army Rangers for more than eight years, and served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He says he's always been interested in the medical field (his mother works in healthcare in Madison) but didn't serve as a medic in the military. Rather, he was a squad leader, in charge of the lives of nine soldiers. And it was while he was deployed in Iraq that one experience in particular set him on the path that led to him to Edgewood College.

On that mission, he says, one of his fellow soldiers from another squad was badly wounded in a firefight. "I didn't panic," he recalls. "I just reacted in a way that seemed like second nature." Jason was able to help keep his comrade alive long enough to reach safety and medical care. All the soldiers in his squad returned home from their tour. "That's one thing I'm very proud of. The nine guys I went over there with—nobody came home with a scratch. They were all alright when they got home—that was the promise I made to each one of their mothers before I left."

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## "Role model" for siblings gets helping hand from Wisconsin Tuition Grant



*Abby Brueggen of Cashton, a senior at Viterbo University*

When Abby Brueggen goes to classes it's almost like family is right alongside her. Coming from a family of nine, Abby understands how important her

Wisconsin Tuition Grant has been both in paying for her education and reducing the financial stress on her parents.

"I'm the oldest child in my family, and a role model for my younger siblings," she said. "I have a 3.3 GPA and made the dean's list. They really look up to me when they see how well I'm doing."

Since arriving on the Viterbo campus, 21-year old Abby has been busy. She serves as a campus tour guide and participates on the campus activities board, symphonic band, the rugby team, and campus ministry.

Scheduled to graduate in 2010, Abby has an extensive list of extra-curricular activities, but she still finds time for the demanding academic schedule that comes with a double major in digital media and graphic design.

The decision to attend Viterbo University was definitely the right one for her, she said.

"I'm very happy here," said the senior. "I chose Viterbo because of the small college atmosphere. There were only 38 kids in my high school class, so Viterbo was a perfect fit. The people at Viterbo are friendly and the small

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## JASON DIAZ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Jason started his education at a large public university, but says "something about it wasn't compatible with me and my learning style." A friend suggested Edgewood College. Thanks to a financial aid package that included the Wisconsin Tuition Grant, Jason was able to make that idea a reality.

He transferred, came for his first semester, and says "it was the best thing I ever did." A smaller community was exactly what he was looking for. "The biggest surprise for me when I came here was that during my first class, the instructor gave me his home phone number, and said 'any questions, any time, give me a call. Just as long as it's not during my favorite show,' and that blew my mind."

Jason says the value of his decision to come to Edgewood College shows in his GPA. "To me that was the deciding factor—this was the fit for

me." And it is his academic performance—and his life experience—that makes him a perfect fit for the school's very selective nursing program. He says his military experience tested him mentally, physically, and emotionally. Jason says facing those challenges—especially in what he calls the 'fragile and hostile environment' of conflict—will serve him well in his career ahead.

"Going through this program can be intimidating for some," Jason says. "There's a lot of work at certain times in the field itself. People are depending on you. So that's the way I handle myself and approach things—people can tell that I've had life experiences that have trained me to be in this situation. Every path taken and bridge crossed in my life has led to this point."

In addition to his coursework at Edgewood, Jason also works at Dean Clinics in Madison as a phlebotomist/EKG technician.

## FACT OF THE MONTH

**Increased education leads to higher voting rates. In the 2006 Congressional election, 61% of citizens with bachelor's degrees voted, compared to only 40% of citizens who ended their education after high school.**

*U.S. Census Bureau*

## ABBY BRUEGGEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

class sizes really appeal to me. The faculty here are awesome. I have plenty of one-to-one time with my professors. When I have questions they are always willing to help."

One of the most memorable experiences Abby had at Viterbo was participating in a campus ministry service trip to the Gulf Coast to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Along with nearly 40 other Viterbo students, Abby spent her spring break helping residents clean up after the devastating flood.

"I saw it as a way to give back to society,

and I shared the story by speaking to a class at a local high school."

Like many young people, Abby, a senior from Cashton, was concerned about financing her college education when she enrolled at Viterbo University.

Abby is one of many Wisconsin students whose college education is made possible through the Wisconsin Tuition Grant. A large percentage of Viterbo's students are first-generation college students, which often makes this type of financial aid even more important.

"The WTG is a critical part of the financial aid package for many of our resident students," said Terry Norman, Viterbo University's director of financial aid. "Over 550 Wisconsin residents received more than 1.5 million dollars in WTG funding in 2007–08, with an average award of \$2,725. The WTG is the fourth largest grant program awarded at Viterbo University. Without this grant, most of those 550 students could not attend college, or would be forced to borrow excessively to fund their college education."

Abby's glad she's among those able to follow her dreams of a college education.

### Wisconsin's Private Colleges and Universities

Alverno College Milwaukee

Beloit College Beloit

Cardinal Stritch University Milwaukee

Carroll University Waukesha

Carthage College Kenosha

Concordia University Mequon

Edgewood College Madison

Lakeland College Sheboygan

Lawrence University Appleton

Marian University Fond du Lac

Marquette University Milwaukee

Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design Milwaukee

Milwaukee School of Engineering Milwaukee

Mount Mary College Milwaukee

Northland College Ashland

Ripon College Ripon

St. Norbert College De Pere

Silver Lake College Manitowoc

Viterbo University La Crosse

Wisconsin Lutheran College Milwaukee

