



HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Giving Back to Education

HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!

Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,

*Matt Allmand, Chairman
HPS Foundation Committee*

Trevor Vandell - Class of 2003

Vandell finds Navy service 'a good fit'

by Kristine Jacobson

Trevor Vandell graduated from Holdrege High School just a decade ago, and he has packed a lot in those 10 years since leaving Duster territory.

He played college football, served in the U.S. Navy in Iraq and twice in Afghanistan, and now is still serving in the Navy working as a Chief Intelligence Specialist at Fort Belvoir, south of Washington, D.C.

Trevor was in high school when the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, occurred. Now, his work has helped his country with the war on terrorism. "I still remember vividly watching all of those scenes play out on TV at school," Trevor said. "While 9/11 wasn't the root cause of why I joined up, my deployments have allowed me to feel like I've at least done something to mitigate the possibility of that event ever reoccurring."

Trevor said he and his fellow soldiers were able to protect the Afghanistan people from attacks and made sure it was safe for children to travel to and from school. They trained local police forces so "they could be a

little more self-sufficient."

"We were able to do some good things over there," Trevor said.

His work has brought him around the world to places that are vastly different from his childhood years on a farm near Funk and then his high school years in Holdrege.

He attended Funk Elementary through the 8th grade and then Holdrege High School, where he was involved in football, wrestling, track, yearbook, and youth group at Fridhem Lutheran Church in Funk.

In high school, he particularly enjoyed his American History and government classes taught by Rick Jeffery and Chad Bailey. "I was always kind of a history guy," Trevor said. "I really enjoyed social studies and learning how the military really shaped our future." He enjoyed reading stories of war battles, including the D-Day Invasion of Normandy, the Battle of Gettysburg, and personal tales of war veterans.

He also enjoyed math teacher Larry Lum, realizing later that the advice Mr. Lum told him "wasn't always about math."

Some of Trevor's best high school memories include the camaraderie he had with his football teammates and the road trips they made to watch basketball games.

After graduating in 2003, Trevor played football for two years at Concordia University in Seward. He then transferred to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to continue his studies. But, midway through his junior year, he decided to take the step he always thought he would and enlist in the military.

"It fits my personality," he said of the U.S. Navy. "I like the structure of it. I like the sense of brotherhood and sense of teamwork about it."

He survived boot camp and then was stationed in Virginia Beach when he volunteered for his first deployment to Iraq in 2008. He spent seven months there, mainly training security forces.

He returned home for a few months and then volunteered for a six-month deployment to Afghanistan. After four months back in the U.S., he volunteered again, this time for a 13-month tour of duty in Afghanistan during 2010-11. During his deployments, he learned a lot about the Muslim culture and a lot about teamwork.

Vandell is proud of what he and his fellow troops were able to accomplish overseas, but after serving in combat zones for more than three years, he was ready for "a change of pace."



*"Kids in Iraq and Afghanistan love candy, and generally all things American. I always try to have some on hand when I'm out and about."
- Trevor Vandell on patrol in the Anbar Province of Iraq in 2008*

He is now stationed at Fort Belvoir, where he reviews security training plans and does trainings and evaluations. "It's mainly a plans and policies job," he said. "It's been a good fit."

He has adapted well to east coast big-city life and has learned to embrace new cultures. "I never used to eat sushi," he said. "Now, I eat Ethiopian, sushi, Indian, Thai ... It's the melting pot of ethnic foods out there," he said of the D.C. area. Vandell plans to continue his service with the Navy, "work toward a promotion and become a better leader."



Trevor Vandell with his parents, Greg and Rona Vandell, on their first visit to Washington, D.C.

Although he wasn't able to attend his 10-year class reunion last summer, Vandell does make it back to see his parents, Greg and Rona Vandell, who still live near Funk. He said although his job was tough while overseas, parents have a tougher job because they are always wondering about their son's or daughter's safety.

"People thank me for my service, but they need to thank my parents," he said.

About Us

The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.

Holdrege Public Schools Foundation

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