



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*

Tyler Christensen - Class of 1999

1999 grad flies at the speed of light in the U.S. Air Force

by Kristine Jacobson

When he is blazing across the sky at 950 mph in an F-15 fighter plane, Tyler Christensen sometimes has to pinch himself. Being a navigator in the United States Air Force wasn't always a dream for the 1999 Holdrege High School graduate, but it's a career he now loves.

Growing up in Holdrege, he pictured himself as a policeman or firefighter someday, and he loved sports. "I played every sport I was allowed to here," he said of his childhood in Holdrege.

In high school, he narrowed his sports to cross country, basketball, and track. He is thankful for the leadership and support he received from his coach Rick Jeffery in track, cross country and swimming, and he is thankful for the community support in sports.

"Playing basketball in front of a home crowd was awesome," Tyler said of his high school days. "It's cool to see the community involvement in the school."

He said fourth-grade teacher Mary Oman also had a positive impact on him. "She had a way of connecting with each student," he said. "No matter who it was, she could make them feel welcome."

Tyler described himself a "B/C student" and "not motivated" in high school. So, when it came time to make a decision about what to do after high school, he chose to enlist in the U.S. Air Force.

"I knew college wasn't in my cards," he said. "I knew I wasn't motivated

to get myself a degree. I wasn't mature enough."

That changed quickly after attending basic training and being stationed in Europe. "The military was a good way to make you grow up quick," he said. His plan was to be stationed in Omaha and stay near his girlfriend (and now wife) Stacie Nelson, a 2000 HHS graduate. She was planning to attend school in Lincoln after graduation.



Capt. Tyler "LINC" Christensen, F-15E Strike Eagle

"I was devastated," he said about his initial assignment. "I hated it for the first couple of months. Then I made friends in England and it got to the point I didn't want to leave."

He was working as a mechanic for the Air Force at RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk, England. He was in England during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. The next day, he was packed and deployed.

"We were in an airplane, and we had no idea where we were going," Tyler said. He ended up in Germany, where he supported troops during Operation Enduring Freedom, the war on terrorism.

It was during his time in England that Tyler decided he was ready to pursue a higher education degree. He re-enlisted in the Air Force through the ROTC program and earned a bachelor's degree in Occupational Education through the Wayland Baptist College in Albuquerque, N.M.

After completing the ROTC program, he was commissioned as an officer and began training to fly F-15s. He trained at schools in Florida and North Carolina. His job now is being the navigator, or the guy who sits behind the pilot. He compared his position to the character "Goose" in the movie "Top Gun."

He and Stacie married in 2004, and he is now stationed at Mountain Home Air Force base in Idaho.

He spends long days at the base training for different scenarios he may be asked to perform with the Air Force, and he has learned to love flying. "It's like riding a roller coaster every day," he said. "We can go faster than the speed of light every day."

One of his favorite times to fly is at night, when it's inspiring and peaceful 40,000 feet up in the sky. "You can just see a billion stars," he said.

In 2012, Tyler was deployed to Afghanistan for seven months to provide support for ground troops and convoys traveling on roads. His official capacity was CAS or Close Air Support. This was one of his most rewarding assignments with the Air Force. "Just giving them (ground troops) the peace of mind that we were protecting them and watching them was rewarding," he said.

While the war was winding down when he was in Afghanistan, they did have to drop bombs on the enemy. He also lost a close friend who was piloting another airplane and crashed.

The loss was hard for both Tyler and his family, which now includes sons, Eli, who is 4; and Isaac, who is 1. So, Tyler is planning a slight career change within the Air Force - flying Remote Piloted Aircrafts, commonly known as drones. Tyler begins training on the drones in San Antonio in August.



Tyler and Stacie (Nelson) Christensen with sons Eli and Isaac

He said drones are controversial, but they are beneficial to the Air Force because they save money - they are smaller and don't use as much fuel or require as much maintenance. He will be able to support troops across the globe while flying remotely in a simulator in the United States.

"I still get to do what I love," he said, "but it will be safer." While he is learning to fly drones, he also hopes to complete his final classes to receive his master's degree in education, which will help his rank in the military and provide for a future job when he retires from his service.

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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