



McKenzie "Mac" Lagestee
Trinity Christian College
McGraw Emergency Financial Aid Fund



2020 has been a difficult year for McKenzie "Mac" Lagestee. Earlier this year, her husband was called to a two-year military deployment at sea. But the pandemic forced him and his unit back to the United States, to the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Miramar, California. Soon after, a COVID-19 outbreak forced some 1,000 cruise ship passengers to be quarantined at the MCAS facility, and Lagestee's husband got sick with COVID-19 while helping deliver food and supplies to the quarantined passengers. In Illinois, Lagestee, a student majoring in nursing at [Trinity Christian College](#), Palos Heights, Illinois, was laid off from her job.

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Lagestee was at Trinity Christian College, in part, because family members had attended the college previously. She began her college years as a marine biology major because she liked the ocean and scuba diving. "I actually quit school for a while and moved to Hawaii for two years and became a dive instructor and tour guide on Oahu," she says. As much as she liked the ocean, Lagestee realized marine biology wasn't the best career path for her. So, she returned to Trinity Christian, focused on biochemistry, and then nursing. Plus, Trinity Christian College is a top Illinois school for nursing.

"My main goal is to become a pediatric oncology nurse," says Lagestee, now junior at Trinity Christian. "I definitely want to work in a pediatric hospital for a while. But right out of nursing school, I was thinking about doing travel nursing for a year to pay off student loans." Such an experience would give her a chance to learn about different cultures, while practicing nursing. Things were going well in clinicals earlier this year, too. "I felt very confident. I enjoyed it. I was so excited when I got back from that first day of clinicals," she says.

But then the pandemic hit. Her husband was sick, and Lagestee was out of work. It was critical that she remain in school to continue in the nursing program. She needed financial help and applied for a COVID-19 emergency student grant from Trinity, and was awarded a grant from the McGraw Emergency Financial Aid Fund, through ACI. The McGraw grant and other financial support she earned made a big difference, she says. "If I and other didn't have that I probably would have had to take the year off," Lagestee says. "There was no guarantee that if I did do that I would get a position in the nursing program next year."

Lagestee's husband is now recovered and is still deployed. This fall, she is living on campus at Trinity Christian College, a helpful step because she wants to limit the possibility of making her mother sick from the coronavirus. She is also working again as a caregiver, helping a specific client on weekends.

Lagestee is grateful for the help she got a critical time from Trinity Christian College, ACI and the McGraw Foundation, and donors. "I just wouldn't be here if it weren't for your donation. I wouldn't be able to become a nurse and help take care of others which is my pride, and I'm so excited to be able to do. And because of you, I'm able to go through this journey and provide Christ-like service to people in need," she says.