

My name is **Gregory S. Backer**, and it is truly an honor to be a recipient of the 2021 ABFSE Scholarship Award. I was born in Englewood, NJ and raised within the town of Elmwood Park, NJ which is affiliated within Bergen County. I have a very loving family consisting of my parents, Steve & Kathleen, and my twin brother, Timothy, and my adorable Beagle/Coon Hound, Harley. I have always been an outgoing and down to earth individual; along with setting goals to achieve.

I have been active within the Boys Scouts of America organization since I was a young boy, earning the rank of Eagle Scout; remaining as a leader within the organization in order to give back. I joined the United States Armed Forces (U.S. Army) where it was an honor to have served for 12+ years, achieving the rank of Captain; and deploying twice overseas to the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), and Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan).

I am an active member of the Knights of Columbus achieving the highest degree (4th Degree) a few years ago. I have been a Lifetime Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a Lifetime Member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and a member of the American Legion (AL). I have an Associate's Degree in Hospitality Management from Bergen Community College; a Bachelor's Degree in Professional Recreation and Tourism from Montclair State University; and a Master's Degree in Business Administration & Information Management from Grantham University.

I have worked in different fields from food and beverage, security, construction, parking and traffic, etc. I have worked within the funeral service industry since around 2009 where I would assist different funeral homes with whatever needed to be done; from making removals, portering, driving, assisting with visitations, dressing and casketing, etc. With that being said, I guess it's safe to say I have always had a passion for the funeral service industry, because I really and truly enjoy being able to put the family members and friends at ease during their time of need after losing someone so close to them.

I remember my mother telling me that my grandfather used to ask her while having lunch; what was Greg doing? Is he doing a funeral today? She would tell him yes, and he would respond with saying that is good; it's a good field to be in. People within the field have always asked me if I ever considered getting my license because "you are good at it and seem to know what you are doing within the field," but I was always busy doing other things. However, as the years went on continuing to work within the field and help out where needed; the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and I found myself working much more within the funeral industry. I decided to go back to school. I registered within the mortuary science program at Mercer County Community College last year and working at Alvarez Funeral Home in Newark, NJ as an apprentice, working towards my goal of becoming a licensed professional within the industry.