

Dr Robert Lee “Bob” Burns Military Service Scholarship

The Dr. Robert Lee “Bob” Burns Military Service Graduate Scholarship honors the legacy of Dr. “Bob” Burns, whose life exemplified unwavering service to **country, career, and community**. This scholarship supports graduate students with military affiliation—veterans, active-duty or former military members, and eligible spouses of disabled or deceased veterans—who are pursuing advanced degrees after traditional military education benefits have been exhausted or are no longer available. Recipients continue Dr. Burns’ legacy of service by advancing their education, leadership, and professional contributions beyond military service.

Dr. Robert Lee “Bob” Burns: A retired colonel in the U. S. Army. He served with the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam, flying medevac helicopters to transport injured soldiers out of harm’s way and coordinate efficient patient flow to area hospitals. His awards included the Bronze Star, Presidential Citation, Distinguished Service Medal, Purple Heart, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, and Vietnam Medal for Civic Action.

After returning from Vietnam, he served as commanding officer of Reynolds Army Hospital in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma and then as operations officer for the task force of new refugee arrivals at Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas. His last military assignment was with the HQ U.S. Central Command as a staff officer for Psychological Operations.

Following three years as superintendent of schools in Mineral Springs, Arkansas, in 1980 joined Farmers Bank and Trust in Magnolia as their 17th employee. He became CEO and President in 1983, leading the bank for the next 40 years. Guided by his vision, the bank grew from assets of \$30 million to the current \$2.8 billion, with over 420 employees, 34 branches in 3 states, and 5 trust offices. His unwavering resolution to create a philanthropic culture in the communities served continues today.

As a lifelong believer in the value of education, law enforcement, and ethics in business, he devoted time and energy to organizations working for these interests, including the following: Southern Arkansas University Board of Trustees (Chairman); Arkansas State Board of Higher Education (Chairman); Accelerate Arkansas; Economic Arkansas (Chairman); Arkansas State Police Commission (Chairman); Arkansas State Police Foundation (founding member, chairman); Arkansas State Police Retirement System Board of Trustees; Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force; Arkansas Bankers Association Board of Directors (Chairman); Magnolia Rotary Club; Magnolia-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce (President); Southwest Arkansas Water District (Treasurer).

He served on the U.S. Secret Service Task Force on Cyber Security to redraft wire transfer protocols for banks across the U.S. After graduating from the FBI Citizens Academy, he served as Director of the FBI Little Rock Citizens Academy Alumni Association and worked to further their community outreach.

He was named the Risk Management Association 2015 Banker of the Year. In 2021, he received the Trooper Ermon Cox Award, given to an individual who supports the mission of the Arkansas State Police Foundation and exemplifies high moral standards. He is a member of the Arkansas State Police Hall of Fame. In 2022, he received the Magnolia-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award.