Dear Jesse Pittman Memorial Scholarship Fund applicant:

We want to provide you with some background on the Jesse Pittman Memorial Scholarship Fund. We hope to give you an understanding of why this scholarship exists and explain who should apply.

Jesse was born and raised among the great redwoods of northern California. He graduated from Willits High School in 2002, and as a young man he worked as a wild land firefighter with CAL Fire. In 2005, that all changed because Jesse volunteered to join the United States Navy with the goal of becoming a SEAL commando. Jesse had a dream and no one could stop him.

Becoming a Navy SEAL is tough. To succeed, the most important qualities are mental toughness and being a good teammate. Jesse was determined and exemplified these traits. In 2006, he graduated from SEAL training and joined his new brothers in defense of America. After completing his third deployment overseas, he volunteered to go again. Jesse had a saying among his teammates, "I don't run, I charge." On August 6, 2011, Jesse was one of thirty-one American heroes lost in the Extortion 17 helicopter crash over Afghanistan. Jesse died while living a life dedicated to service and conquering challenges. His next goal upon returning home was to attend college and earn his bachelor's degree. The Pittman family places a high value on education, demonstrated as Jesse's younger brother went on to graduate from college. Now, our goal is for Jesse's wish to carry on through this scholarship fund.

The Jesse Pittman Memorial Scholarship Fund is dedicated to finding determined young Americans who share Jesse's spirit. We want to become a part of their future by aiding with the cost of college tuition. The scholarship selects from high school graduates in Mendocino County and provides a variety of scholarship amounts based on the student's financial need and personal qualities.

Annually, we raise money for the scholarship with the Jesse Pittman Memorial 5K race. Beginning in 2012, the event offers a 5K run or walk along the trails around Lake Mendocino in Ukiah. It generally takes place on a Saturday morning in late June, and kicks off with the announcement of the newly selected scholarship recipient. The race has grown in popularity each year with over 150 participants of all ages either running, walking, or riding in a stroller. To raise money for the fund, competitors reach out to the whole community to generate more interest and participation. It's a day of remembrance, friendship, and fun. Jesse loved the outdoors and trained in and around this lake before he joined the military. It is the perfect place to honor his memory.

A small committee made up of Jesse's close friends and family reviews all applications and selects a yearly scholarship recipient. This scholarship is not intended just for the one with the best grades or the top athlete. We are looking for those cut from Jesse's cloth, and therefore the selection criteria is open to our interpretation. We are in search of young people who demonstrate their value through grit, hard work, and determination; young people with an uncommon desire to succeed, and those who answer the call to service. Jesse Pittman is a tough act to follow. As a Navy SEAL he set the bar high, but we know there are others like him. For America to be strong, we need to find more young people like Jesse and ensure they have opportunities to learn and grow. Our goal is to set them on a path to keep raising the bar. As Jesse would say, don't run, charge!

It is our hope that this scholarship will serve as a modest tribute and remembrance of Jesse, as well as a contribution to your education and a benefit our society. We believe each recipient will carry on Jesse's dreams. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and we hope you will apply.

Sincerely,

The Founders: Terry & Ida Pittman, Barry Scott, Eric Hayes, and Jeremy Treskon