



How ROTC Has Helped Me

Kristina Mountz, *Basha High School*

Since I was little, I had dreams of joining the military. Having an army dad, I had an affinity for the army, but before long, my attention was turned to the US Air Force and the idea of being a pilot. Immediately, I began researching every possibility as I knew this was what I wanted my future to be. This led to my discovery of JROTC and the amazing experiences that came with it. JROTC has helped me navigate change by turning me into a social person, understanding how to be a good leader, and learning to manage responsibility.

My first day of high school was nerve-wracking, as it is for any kid, and especially with my past awkwardness, I had no clue how my fellow cadets would accept me. Yet the first step I took in the classroom, I was greeted by a kind girl whom I didn't know the name of, and she invited me to sit next to her. I soon learned that nearly every cadet shared this kindness. Being the shy, socially-awkward kid that I was, joining JROTC immediately showed me how to shed this layer of my personality and become an open person. Due to the welcoming community surrounding the program, I learned vital aspects of how to socialize, bond with others, lead others, and of course, follow others. Not only did this help me grow as a person, but soon I was applying these skills to other aspects of my life, increasing my performance in group work, making friends, and making others feel comfortable as well. Socialization is of huge importance to people, especially kids in high school as they experience all sorts of change, and being able to learn how to communicate

and socialize through JROTC was one of the biggest reasons I grew to love the program.

As the year continued on, I had the opportunity to learn about the numerous events that JROTC offered such as community services, orienteering, and leadership opportunities. It was through these experiences that I learned what it meant to not only be a good leader, but a good follower as well. Similar to many kids in high school, I was quick to take charge and do things my way. But through the chain of command in JROTC, I realized that in this system you listen to those above you. Especially when I participated in events, I learned what it meant to learn from those around you, and as I grew in the corps, I learned to take those lessons and apply them to myself when my time came to lead. As I write this now, I am a flight sergeant and our tutoring club deputy, and coming into these positions I was able to incorporate the many lessons my fellow cadets taught me and to use them to become a better leader. It took effort at first to swallow my pride and do as told, but as time went on, I realized that for the corps to be functional, we all had to do our jobs...and my job at the time was to listen. These lessons in leadership and listening helped me greatly in the corps, but also helped me in the rest of my high school classes as I collaborated with other students on projects and learned from other swimmers on my swim team. Through listening to others, I was able to grow and gain the attributes that a good leader should have.

When my first year of JROTC came to a close and I arrived in the classroom on the first day of my second year, I was handed the NCO test and told my new position if I wanted it. Of course, my immediate reaction was to be ecstatic, and once I had passed the test, I was eager to do everything I could as a flight sergeant. With the title, however, came responsibility that I was unaware of how to handle. Being second in command for a classroom of 15 students, while also being monitored and trained, was a lot to take in. Being the inexperienced high school student that I was, the responsibility scared me at first. Before long, with the help of my flight commander, I was taking the reins and learning how to guide my class. I had to manage my time better, doing homework for five other classes while also creating events for my JROTC class, grading other students, and tutoring kids on the side, not to mention swim practice every day after school. My first instinct was to shut down from being overwhelmed, yet I kept my composure and carried on. From my peers, I was able to adapt to my situation and take on the new responsibility. From then on, I applied that same ability to my home life in looking after my siblings and pets, my school life in finishing my homework on time, and my athletic life in pushing myself to be the best I could be.

JROTC is now one of the biggest parts of my life. From entering high school as a nervous student to finishing the first half of my second year as a good friend, a strong leader, and a responsible student, I have JROTC to credit for all these changes. JROTC has helped me navigate my high school, social, athletic, and home life by providing me with these skills that I plan to maintain and grow as I continue to age. Had I bailed out that first day like my instincts told me to, I would've never become the person I am today. I am incredibly grateful for the JROTC program and the way it has helped me shape and navigate my life.

Kristina Mountz

Basha High School

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