



How has being a JROTC cadet shaped what community means to you, and how have cadet principles been applied and expressed in your daily life?

Ryann Terrell, *Basha High School*

If someone had asked what my definition of community was prior to my involvement in JROTC, I would have said my close family and friends. In the few months since then I have been included in more memorable experiences than I have in any other class or club, which has led to new friends and connections with a variety of different people. Even my daily JROTC class period has introduced me to a new team of people that I continue to grow closer with. Thus, the friends I have made in my flight, the people I have met through community service, and the close bond I have with the people in programs similar to mine, has tremendously changed my definition of community through my participation in JROTC.

Although, when I first joined JROTC I was worried that I'd be alone and embarrassed in a class where I was the only girl, I soon became closer to my fellow cadets through teamwork and lesson learning. As a flight we work through everything together. My flight gets punished together and praised together. They truly became a part of my close community because we grew to rely on each other. A hard task could be accomplished if everyone did the part they were good at. At the beginning of the school year I had a cadet in my flight who had to move for his 5th time. He had become a friend to everyone. His goal was to beat the record amount of sit-ups in a minute, before he moved. On the last day we kneeled down on the floor

and cheered him on. It became an event and everyone was excited to count over and over again until he reached his goal. Ultimately, he completed it and he left with gifts from not only his flight, but from our whole chain of command. This one person was a huge part of our team. This program gave me a community of people who are always proud of what I can do, as well as a group of friends that will always look out for me and help me reach my goals.

Similarly, being a cadet has introduced me to a community of people who are all around selfless. I believe that anyone who is willing to do something selfless with their time is a part of my community. It is easy to find happiness and connections with people when you work together to accomplish something beneficial for other people, animals, and even the planet. In the beginning of this school year, community service was just something I did because I had to, to be what I considered a good cadet. As time has moved forward, this program has given me joy and pride in doing community service, regardless of what kind. I have met a large number of people who work constantly just to make the world a better place. This group of selfless people are always extremely grateful for the work the cadets do. Many times we continue to volunteer at the same places for years because of the friendships that are formed in acts of selflessness and gratitude.

The combination of the military, the ROTC programs, and the JROTC programs continues to build a wide reaching community of people. Regardless of class, race, age, religion, ect. there is a brotherly/sisterly bond that is built in these programs. Undoubtedly, one of the most exciting days of my life happened this school year and it made me expand my definition of community. I had entered into the Veteran's Day parade essay competition and won! Throughout that day I met an abundant amount of people with different stories and backgrounds, but they all took the time to congratulate me. Although, this wasn't even my favorite part of the day. A veteran had thanked me for my service. I was grateful but I tried to explain that I hadn't yet served. Without question this elderly veteran reassured me that it did not matter if I had served or not, participating and representing our country in the uniform was something he believed should be appreciated. I felt as if I was part of a large family of people that day, with the utmost pride. The parade had thousands of peo-

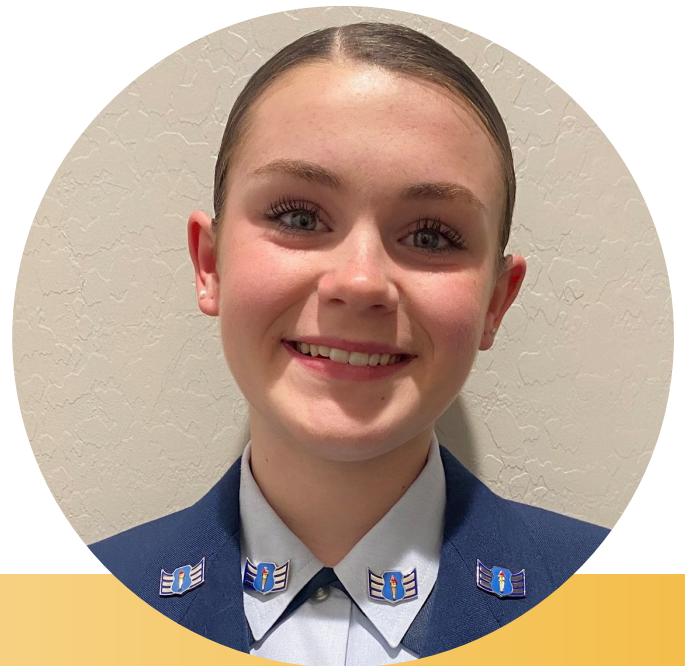
ple gathered along the streets to thank our veterans, and among them were veterans themselves. There is an unspoken unity about these programs that allows for even people like me to be included in such a large community.

Altogether JROTC has shown that my community isn't just close family and friends. My community is the teammates I work with every day to accomplish new goals. My community is also the people who I bond with through simple acts of kindness. Lastly, my community is the thousands of people that without a doubt appreciate me regardless of what they have accomplished themselves. I continue to accomplish more and more great things because of this amazing program, and the amazing people I have met in it.

Ryann Terrell

Basha High School

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