



Ethical Cadet Scholarship

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When I first arrived at my school, I was still young and immature. I was a child amongst young adults, at the time, I had no problem with that. I lived in my protected bubble as an accelerated middle school student and wasn't allowing much interaction with the highschoolers. That remained true outside of school as well. I lived in a comfortable household, I didn't have much access to the internet, and I was never interested in the news that played on our TV. I knew very little when it came to anything outside of my bubble of comfort and protection. Eventually, that began to change as I progressed from being a child to a young adult. I began to pay attention to more of what was happening around me. It started with a better understanding of my school and what exactly happens within it. I would notice students in fancy uniforms walking around and I would sometimes see them lined up and standing in a professional manner out in the courtyard. At this moment, I became interested in who these people were and what they were doing. After asking around, I learned that they were cadets from our AFJROTC program.

At the moment, all I knew about JROTC was that it had something to do with the military and that was it. I did have a good understanding about the military due to my grandpa serving in the South Vietnam Army during the war, but after seeing other people closer to my age doing something similar to what my grandpa did, the program piqued my curiosity. When I went back home, I decided to ask my parents more about my grandpa's story and his time in the military. My parents don't like to talk about their time

in Vietnam since they lived there during the peak of the war, they had lost so much. That night I cried. I learned about all the hardships they faced. My dad lost his home at the age of 8 due to an air raid and had to escape to China by boat with his five siblings due to my grandparents being government workers that sided with the United States. My grandpa was a prisoner of war for many years, and my mother and her family grew up poor and had to move to the US after my grandpa was released in hopes of finding a better life. I knew so little of the world and could never imagine all that my parents and grandparents had gone through in order to give my siblings and I the life we live now. After that night, I knew I wanted to do more, learn more, and be more than who I was.

Eventually, it was my time to go to highschool, I knew I wanted to join JROTC in order to become a part of something that is bigger than myself. Sadly, due to conflicts with the other classes I wanted to take as a freshman, I wasn't able to, but that didn't stop me. The next year, I made sure to leave room in my schedule so I could take the class. While not much happened during the first semester due to COVID, once we were able to return to school, things began to change. I learned more about JROTC -- all the unique experiences, trips, and friendships that you can't find anywhere else. My first major event I attended was the Bataan Death March Memorial Hike. Participating in that 14.2 mile hike allowed me to experience just a piece of what our military had to go through in order to protect others. It was something I had never thought about, but now, I will never forget. Gradually,

I also learned about the Air Force's core values: "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do". When I first joined, I didn't really understand what any of it meant, but I wanted to. My instructors recommended that I try out for the Honor Guard if that is what I wanted, and that is what I did. By the second semester of my sophomore year, I became a member of our Corps Honor Guard.

While in the Honor Guard, our team has been invited to present the Colors at many events-- the Folds of Honor Golf Tournament and Gala, the renaming of the local VA clinic, the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, and a POW/MIA ceremony for the local American Legion Post. By being a part of all of these events, I learned what it truly meant to have "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do". But my service did not stop there, I also participated in many community services that were arranged by the Corps and accumulated over 100 community service hours. After seeing the impact that we had on our local community and veterans, I knew what I wanted to do after high school. I wanted to join the United States military and give back to the country that I had come to love and desired to protect.

I am now my unit's Deputy Corps Commander and I know how important it is to care for and mentor the cadets that I lead. This is my last year at my school before I graduate and go on to further my education either at the Naval Academy or a college under a NROTC scholarship. That also means this is my last chance to leave a lasting impact on the Corps and the cadets within it. I want to teach my cadets all that I have learned and have them understand what it is we do and why we do it. I have made life-long friendships and experienced so many things, all of which our cadets can have as well if they give it a chance. The community in which I have come to love is where I belong . . . and it's where I've always belonged.

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