



JROTC Shapes Lives

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Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps is the best class to prepare students for adulthood. The phrase “prepare for life” is thrown around all the time at school, in all sorts of classes. This phrase seems to say that our lives haven’t started yet while we are here in high school. I disagree. Highschool is the number one place for teenagers to change the trajectory of the rest of their lives ahead of them, not just prepare for the future. That’s why I decided to join JROTC. I want to build myself a great future and I want to change what my current life is now. With only being in JROTC for two years, I have learned countless valuable lessons and skills that will guide me throughout all my challenges in life. I know that what I have learned here and will continue to learn will shape who I am as a person and the kind of life I will continue to lead.

In all aspects of life, we are never alone. There is always a family to take care of, or loved ones to think about, coworkers working with you, or leaders guiding you. There is always someone. One thing I have learned solely in JROTC is how to communicate with others. Whether I have work to conduct or a problem to resolve, I always have help. This is one of the beautiful things of JROTC, it is built nearly exactly to resemble future experiences of the current cadets. I will always have people with me in all parts of my life. It is very valuable to have learned how to communicate with others at such a young age and be able to take this knowledge with me throughout all my experiences. I have learned to take others into consideration and think about the kind of person they are before I engage with them. Everyone is different and our minds think differently, which is why working together can often be

bumpy and frustrating. I know that I will experience these circumstances again in my life, so learning this in JROTC has allowed me to apply it to things in my life even now, and practice for future experiences throughout my life. It is a true shame that so many people don’t learn this, so I am very grateful to be a part of this program so I can learn it and put it into action so young.

Part of JROTC is learning how to build yourself up. We all start at rock bottom, the question is, what are you as a cadet going to do with this opportunity to accomplish so much? JROTC gives cadets the blessing of being rewarded for their effort and seeing their work succeed and be noticed. In many circumstances in life, this is not the case. Even for some cadets in JROTC, they fail to see any of their accomplishments come to light. Whether this is because of simple human error or not, it takes a toll on the self esteem of cadets. I myself will get discouraged when I put my effort and energy into something and it gets disregarded or blown over. I have learned that it is essential to being a good leader to have experienced failing. Failing is the best way to learn. JROTC pushes cadets to always try. No matter how hard the circumstance may be, to always try. When I was just starting out in JROTC, I took this council to heart and built myself up from the bottom. I went through nearly every experience a cadet can go through. This has allowed me to be a better leader to those cadets who are currently going through them. I have come to understand that leaders who haven’t gone through the work that those who they are leading have, obtain less respect from their cadets, have a harder time being in charge, and have much less trust from their cadets. I know my leadership isn’t perfect, but I firmly

believe that working my way through trial after trial to the top allows me to relate to my cadets and be the best leader I can be. I know this will help me not lose hope when I am starting something new in my life. Instead of giving up I will be able to know that someday I will be able to guide someone through this so they don't have to struggle through the same things like I did.

A third lesson that I have learned is how to balance kindness and optimism with stern and strong actions. I believe that these four things build the most trust in a leader. Being able to know that you are understood and that your leader is fighting for you on your team, is the most comforting thought not just for a young JROTC cadet, but for anyone going through new experiences.. But also understanding that your leader won't back down and be weak on the important things is empowering and strengthening. These aspects of a leader are what builds the most trust, and I strongly believe that trust is the most important thing in all matters of life. Trust goes two ways. You can trust someone, and someone can trust you. When you can trust someone, you can learn from them. I have seen in my life that those I trust are the ones I learn from the most. Trust builds strength in a person's character. Then there's the second part of trust, which is someone being able to trust you. This is perhaps the most crucial and hardest part of being a leader. When you can't be trusted, nothing will get done, no one will respect you, and most importantly, you won't teach anything to those who are supposed to look up to you. You are an example, so be a good one to everyone who looks to you in no matter what the circumstance may be. Balancing human kindness with strength will allow difficult aspects of leadership and life to be overcome.. The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps has taught me many lessons. These lessons will guide me on my path through life. I can't imagine where I would be without them. This program has taught me how to work with

others no matter the circumstance, always put in my best effort and work hard, and be humble and strong to build trust. These lessons will bring leadership right to my door. I firmly believe that JROTC is the most valuable thing I am doing in my life right now, and will continue to be the most valuable place I can put my time at this age. I can look back and know that I learned incredible things, and didn't waste my time. Too much time is wasted in teenagers' lives when it is such a crucial time to be learning. I can have the comfort of already having learned these lessons in my youth instead of having to struggle as an adult to learn them. I will build myself a life I can be excited and satisfied with because of what I have learned here in JROTC. I am eternally grateful and proud to be a part of JROTC and I know that it has rewarded me not just with friendships and memories but with skills, knowledge, and lessons that will guide and direct me throughout every trial, every challenge, and every milestone in my life.

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