



Ethical Cadet Essay

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Robert Townsend had once stated “A leader is not an administrator who loves to run others, but someone who carries water for his people so that they can get on with their jobs.” Townsend perfectly encapsulates what character, leadership, and service mean to me with that quote and analogy. In connection to that, being enrolled in Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC), has allowed me to demonstrate those traits and learn more about what makes someone a leader, or what improves one’s character, and what service truly means. Being an exemplary leader, having an admirable character, and being devoted to service means a lot to myself and others, and AFJROTC makes me embody these qualities.

To begin, leadership means a lot to me, because I feel that is an important quality to have, not just in AFJROTC but life in general. I significantly gained much more respect and desire for good leadership when I had the privilege of being my flight’s Flight Sergeant. Leadership was especially important to me because I felt that there was a lack of responsible and able leadership in many experiences I have been a part of and it would frustrate me. So being in a leadership position in AFJROTC gave me the opportunity to practice leadership and to perform duties that are essential to the operation of not just my flight, but the corps in general. As a Flight Sergeant I always showed up on time, always respected my superiors, but most importantly I never disregarded others ideas or looked down on people. Even in other positions of leadership, like at community services through this program, if I happen to be in charge, I treat everyone equally with the same honor, dignity, and respect that I would like to receive. A quote that has really redefined leadership for me, personally, is Abraham Lincoln’s quote on what it means to be a leader, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to

test a man’s character, give him power.” This is what true leadership means, leadership does not mean ignoring others while accepting some, it does not mean thinking you are superior, it means retaining your dignity and respect as a person despite the power you have been given, and that is really important to me, and it is something that I try to replicate everyday in and out of AFJROTC.

In addition, character is essential to truly defining a person. A person with good character can achieve a lot whether it be in AFJROTC or in life. Having a good character to me simply means that a person is a decent, respectful, and hardworking individual who has morals that they base their actions on. In AFJROTC character is important because it ties back into leadership, you simply can not have good leadership if you do not have good character. As a person, I feel that through AFJROTC I have been able to expand my character and gain more self respect and respect for others. For example, always addressing officer’s or other dignitaries as either “Sir” or “Ma’am,” doing something the first time it is asked and in a timely manner, and even making sure your uniform is nice and neat when you wear it on the assigned day.. Though this may seem insignificant, to me it is incredibly important in establishing a good character, knowing that you respect your superiors and you respect the institution, because that is what character all is, respect.

Lastly, service is what AFJROTC is all about. The program does not just serve the community but it serves us, as individuals. Service has a big meaning to me, because while the other qualities are great in benefiting yourself, with service you can serve others and see others, especially in our community thrive because of our service working together. The most significant aspect of service I have gained through AFJROTC, has

been the countless community services that I have been fortunate enough to attend and be a part of. Even if the community service is as simple as cleaning some trash around a park, or as complex as helping to manage a crowd for a big public event, at the end of the day that all equals service to others. Also, service is incredibly important in AFJROTC, because as a military program it is designed to inspire young people, as myself, to go out into their communities and serve, so that when and if the time comes where these students enlist in the Armed Forces they will already have the pleasure of serving their communities and now will be able to serve our great nation. A thought that has stuck with me for the past two years that I have been in this program is this, it was the first week of my freshman year and in this program, Colonel Stansell told us as a group, that service can be even waking up early in the morning for zero hour, dressed up in our uniforms ready to start the day strong. This is exactly what service means to me because with dedication, your service to others can truly make your community a better place and you a better person.

In conclusion, service, character, and leadership are all tied together to make a well balanced and hardworking individual and community. Back to what Robert Townsend said about this topic, being a leader, a person of great character, and being serviceable does not mean acting above the rest, it means carrying the torch forward and leading the crowd, but also while doing this listening to the crowd. That will always be my biggest takeaway from AFJROTC, even though I have met some amazing people and have had amazing experiences, the experience of learning what being a leader truly means is something that I will keep with me for the rest of my life.

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