

10/10/0 SRT

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### A Better Citizen

My arms tremble as I hold my rifle, and my legs shake as I maintain my military bearing. It's 0800 hours on a Saturday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Sweat trickles down my face as I stand in my Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps service uniform. It's time. I stand guard to the American Flag. We're called to "Attention." We march to our position in front of the crowd. I'm not nervous, but my adrenaline is pumping and I am filled with energy. I count cadence in my head. Left...left... left, right, left. We're there. Present ARMS! As I present arms, I hear the National Anthem begin to play. A warm sensation spreads through my body as I sing the lyrics in my head in time with the music. I see veterans from the Vietnam War in my peripheral vision; I'm honored to be in their presence and proud to be on this honor guard to present the Colors to these patriots who have fought for our country. As the song draws to a close, I'm proud, proud of these veterans, my country, and proud to be an American.

I can remember the first day of high school, the first day of JROTC. I walked into a class of kids standing next to their desks. Their hands were behind them, their feet were apart, and they were staring straight forward. I took an open seat and tried my best to mimic them. I would have thought the sight hilarious if I wasn't so intimidated. That day I got my cadet guide and learned the Air Force Song, the Air Force core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do, and I learned the AFJROTC mission; to build better citizens dedicated to serving their nation and community. If it wasn't for JROTC I wouldn't have been at the VFW and more importantly I wouldn't be who I am today; a citizen dedicated to serving my nation and community. That first day in JROTC I was a Cadet Basic. Now, I am a Cadet Major. I have

come from being a new cadet to Deputy Corps Commander, and from being ignorant of drill to Drill Team Commander. Experiences in JROTC, responsibilities of being on Command Staff, leadership from leading a drill team, and volunteering for community service, has taught me how to follow, lead, help, and to take pride in my country. Four characteristics that I believe make a better citizen of the United States of America. I have specifically learned how to follow from participating on the Cypress Ridge Blazing Rams Unarmed Drill Team, how to lead by commanding the Blazing Rams, how to help by being taught service before self, and I have learned to be proud of my country through exposure to military veterans and American history.

I know I am not alone when I say that the JROTC has helped me to be a better citizen. I have seen cadets, who I never thought would have put service before themselves, spend weekends doing community service. I have drilled next to cadets who have never been dedicated to anything before. JROTC does not just build "better" citizens, but creates the best citizens from kids who have never been given a chance to be good at anything else. It sculpts a masterpiece out of materials whose potential was never known. JROTC has prepared me to be a better citizen by making me who I am today; a proud American citizen who knows how to follow, as well as lead, and who will always volunteer to help others less fortunate than myself.