



## What does leadership, character and service mean to you?

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I've learned during my time in JROTC just how many important elements there are to becoming an amazing cadet. The most important of those elements are leadership, character, and service. These elements help cadets not only with life in JROTC, but will also help cadets with everyday life. I'm excited to share some of my experiences and how they have helped encompass these characteristics.

Prior to being involved in JROTC I would have defined leadership in the more traditional sense of simply being in a position of authority or in charge. I now describe leadership as influencing, guiding, or leading others to accomplish a common goal or mission. I have learned cadets can demonstrate leadership by providing purpose, motivation, and direction. Recently, I participated in the Bataan Death March Memorial Hike, a 14.2 mile march in remembrance of WWII POWs in the Philippines, with over 150 other cadets. I was able to motivate my smaller team of 20 cadets to work together to complete the march as the top team. I realized leadership can be simply encouraging the team by reminding them of the bigger purpose. It was physically demanding and we were tired. It would have been easy to slow down or take more breaks, but speaking about the WWII journey the POWs made, gave us the courage and energy to push forward. I felt great about being a part of that encouragement. As a Freshman, I am not in a formal leadership position or even an upperclassman, but felt empowered and accomplished that I was able to contribute in that manner. I believe it is key that everyone has the opportunity to lead in JROTC, whether in the

traditional sense or through less formal roles.

As a cadet, character plays an important part in everything I do. I believe character is most often defined as how someone acts. My definition of character is how a cadet shows honor, integrity, respect, responsibility and compassion for their fellow cadets, teachers and their community. One way that cadets show character is through what they do to serve their community. The charity Feed My Starving Children was a volunteer opportunity this year that I participated in where I saw the character of my fellow cadets. By serving at places like Feed My Starving Children, I witnessed cadets showing respect, humility, and compassion for those less fortunate. We also participated in a community service event for cancer awareness. Helping organizations who support cancer patients helps us show our respect and makes us more grateful for the life we are living. Having good character is a very important part in being a great cadet. Setting a great example is essential as I work towards getting involved in many other activities in JROTC.

All types of service play an important role in being an honorable cadet, whether it is community service or service by helping out your fellow cadets. To me, the core value in service is putting others before yourself. Service can be a simple act, like helping put a tablecloth on a table, or a larger task like working at Barktoberfest (a fundraiser for the Friends for Life Animal Rescue in Gilbert) where we helped set up the event, assisted with the larger vendors booths and directed parking.

One of the most influential events I was a part of this year was a field trip to Luke Air Force Base. I was one of a few cadets selected to attend, which was a great honor. Prior to attending this event, I talked to one of my family members, now stationed at Langley, who was a senior non commissioned officer at Luke Air Force Base. I wanted to hear firsthand what service means to an airman. He told me something profound. He said that as an Officer he would sometimes have little to no involvement or oversight in day-to-day missions; however he would serve his fellow airmen by being the best version of himself at all times to help them be the best version of themselves. He said he would pour into his fellow airmen by developing himself personally and professionally in order to provide them with the skills and opportunities to make them high performing individuals who will continue to grow and develop the next generation of airmen. I found it interesting that his goals were not for himself, but the ultimate outcome was always on his airmen and not himself. While at the base, I got to see these types of service firsthand and it was very impactful. After that trip, I came back motivated to apply those principles of service to my JROTC

unit. I am committed to serving my community by signing up for as many service events as I can and also looking for opportunities to serve my fellow cadets and my JROTC program. The key principles of life are also the key principles of JROTC. Joining JROTC has taught me leadership, character and service. JROTC has really turned my point of view on these principles in a good way. JROTC made me realize that leadership is more than a position, character is more than the way someone acts and service has a deeper meaning than just doing something for someone. JROTC has greatly impacted my views and showed me how great of an impact I can be to my community and my JROTC unit just by applying these basic, yet so powerful principles.

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*2024 BBB Ethical Cadet Scholarship Recipient*



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