

## How JROTC has Prepared Me to be a Better Citizen of the United States of America

JROTC's mission is to the point: "To motivate young people to become better citizens". Every day, Americans are faced with opportunities to help others, and therefore, become better citizens. The problem is that many of us choose not to help because it is too "hard." Fortunately, JROTC has influenced me by giving me the motivation and the confidence to make a difference. Whether it be something small, like picking up trash, or something big, like starting a district-wide volunteer program, it is JROTC that inspired me to get involved, give back to my community, and be a better citizen.

Perhaps the best way JROTC helps us to become better citizens is by providing opportunities to volunteer within the community. Through volunteering, we give back to the community and help others. Volunteering has become one of the most rewarding things I do. The best part is that it gives me firsthand experience in real world situations. I have learned about respect and honor through the Homeless Veterans Burial program that our battalion participates in. I have cleaned up neighborhood streets through the JROTC Adopt-a-Highway sponsorship, and I have witnessed sacrifice as my battalion supports the Susan Koman "Race for the Cure".

As I become a better citizen, I strive to take the lessons learned in JROTC with me when I volunteer at the San Antonio Zoo, at the Wounded Warrior Center, with Soldiers' Angels, on the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) board, and even through Boy Scouts. The skills and experiences I have gained from volunteering in JROTC are what give me the confidence and resourcefulness to reach out to others in my community. Furthermore, JROTC has taught me to take the initiative in encouraging others to step up and join me in volunteering in our community. As a result, I recently coordinated a district-wide program in support of "Soldiers' Angels"; where volunteers put together packages for troops serving overseas. This program continues to grow and has become a successful district-wide volunteer effort.

Volunteering is great, but it is not the only tool that JROTC has given me to use in my growth towards becoming a better citizen. Anyone who lives by the JROTC Cadet Creed which states, "... I will always practice good citizenship and patriotism..." is a living example of good citizenship. I have learned that my actions have consequences, and because of my JROTC training, I always ask myself if the action I am about to take will bring credit upon my family, my faith, my school, and the corps of cadets. If the answer is no, then I choose another path. Following this creed has taught me how to keep my moral compass straight, has given me a broader understanding of how to uphold the law, and has helped me encourage others to do the same. JROTC has given me the ability to identify a bad situation and take steps to try and prevent it. I have used the skills that I learned in JROTC to influence others to reconsider decisions that they may someday regret. I have even convinced friends to not break the law, even if they see their peers doing it. JROTC has taught me that a citizen is always willing to help others, whether it is a friend, a family member or just someone in need.

The most important thing I have learned, that has made me a better citizen, is the ability to work with others. One of my mentors in the JROTC program once told me, "The world would be a better place if we could all just get along." In JROTC, we believe that by learning different perspectives, we can understand each other better and therefore get along. I believe that if more people understood this, the world would be filled with better citizens and truly would be a better place. JROTC provides a great foundation for anyone to become a better citizen, and I am thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in such an admirable organization.