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Cadet's Essay Captures National Award

Plano West Senior High School JROTC Cadet Ben Prager has captured a second place national award in the U.S. Army JROTC program essay contest. According to Plano ISD Senior Army Instructor and District Coordinator John Napoli (Major, U.S. Army, retired) there are 269,000 students in the U.S. Army JROTC across the nation; 100,000 are juniors and seniors required to write an essay. Of the 400 essays that were submitted to a higher headquarters for further competition, 24 were submitted to Cadet Command at FT Monroe, VA. Ben Prager, a third-year cadet, placed second among three winners. His essay follows.

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“JROTC Differs From Other High School Courses”

by Cadet Ben Prager
Plano West Senior High School

The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program stands out from traditional high school course offerings. Courses such as English, math, history, and science are all important. These courses have their value and impact on a person's knowledge. However, in my opinion, JROTC surpasses all courses in value, content, and impact. What separates JROTC from the other courses is the scope of building confident, competent, and better citizens through instruction and implementation of real-life experiences.

Traditional courses are designed to teach a specific knowledge base or skill. These courses are developed and implemented to hone in on a defined content and to provide students the opportunity to gain knowledge in a particular subject area.

JROTC also has a curriculum and skills students are to learn. However, JROTC goes beyond basic skills and focuses on developing the whole cadet: mind, body, and soul. Through the program, cadets mature and grow. Cadets learn to be fit, effective communicators. Leadership is exemplified as cadets rise in the ranks and take on greater responsibilities. The holistic approach is evident in learning history, geography, citizenship, financial planning, customs/courtesies, roles of the military, and much more.

A variety of life experiences is made available and put into practice through JROTC, helping shape young cadets. Cadets are taught to be aware of their surroundings and make educated well thought-out responses. The importance of community and the privileges of being a U.S. citizen are part of the life skills learned in JROTC. These help mold disciplined, motivated, and confident youth.

The program also encompasses extra-curricular activities that require skills for competitions. These competitions showcase and perfect all that is being taught in the course.

Even more importantly, JROTC stands out in the pride that it instills in its members. JROTC has fostered a brother/sisterhood of members. Through participation in the program, a bond is forged and a respect developed, not only among the cadets, but from the school and the community.

Yes, content subjects are important and necessary; however, JROTC's scope of skills and experiences builds the whole person, thus shaping the future of our nation.

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