

cadets with COURAGE

Family history, relatives who serve drive ROTC cadets into program

Though there are students who enter ROTC because of simple interest or a chat with their middle school guidance counselor, some have a deeper, familial history of upholding those very same values. **Maddy Causey**, 11, whose uncle was an ex-Marine, operated light armored vehicles overseas. He served in both Afghanistan and Africa for four years of active duty.

"Well obviously I was really young at the time... but now that I'm in ROTC and I'm thinking about the military I can really look up to [him]." Causey said. "He did a lot during his time [and] he does a lot for me and everybody else."

Although Causey had past experience with the armed forces, Wando's ROTC program still helped expand her knowledge of the military and increase her confidence in the career path.

"I've learned a lot from it," Causey said, "...freshman year I was nervous, I didn't really speak up much...now I feel more confident, so that's helped a lot."

Amelia Miller, 9, said she also felt compelled to join due to family in the military.

"[My dad] went straight from high school into the Coast Guard, I think this is his 13th year serving, he loves it," Miller said.

Though her freshman year has been kicked off virtually, Miller has been able to participate in ROTC events.

"It has made it easier [to transition into high school]... and I am a lot more used to some of the [ROTC] stuff... being in that presence of the military," Miller said.

Being a child of a military family, as well as the frequent moves she's experienced as a result, have helped Miller be more outgoing around new people.

"It has just made me much more open. We used to move constantly, so... I just have to really be out there, out and

open with everybody," Miller said.

Though she was apprehensive about meeting new people in the program, Miller found the ROTC community to be both amicable and helpful.

"[The environment] is really friendly," Miller said. "Everybody [was] really welcoming."

Students, such as **Jake Leiker**, 12, plan to take the military path themselves. Leiker is completing his senior year while being an official member of the U.S. Army.

"I went to basic training [over the summer]," Leiker said. "I trained at an Army base, [one in] Fort Benning, Ga."

Leiker's background in the ROTC program has given him a leg up in furthering his career.

"In the army, I'm a private first class...and my experience from [ROTC], now that I'm enlisted, got me a higher pay-grade," Leiker said.

Leiker said he also learned incredible skills from participating in the ROTC program that will help him succeed in his military career.

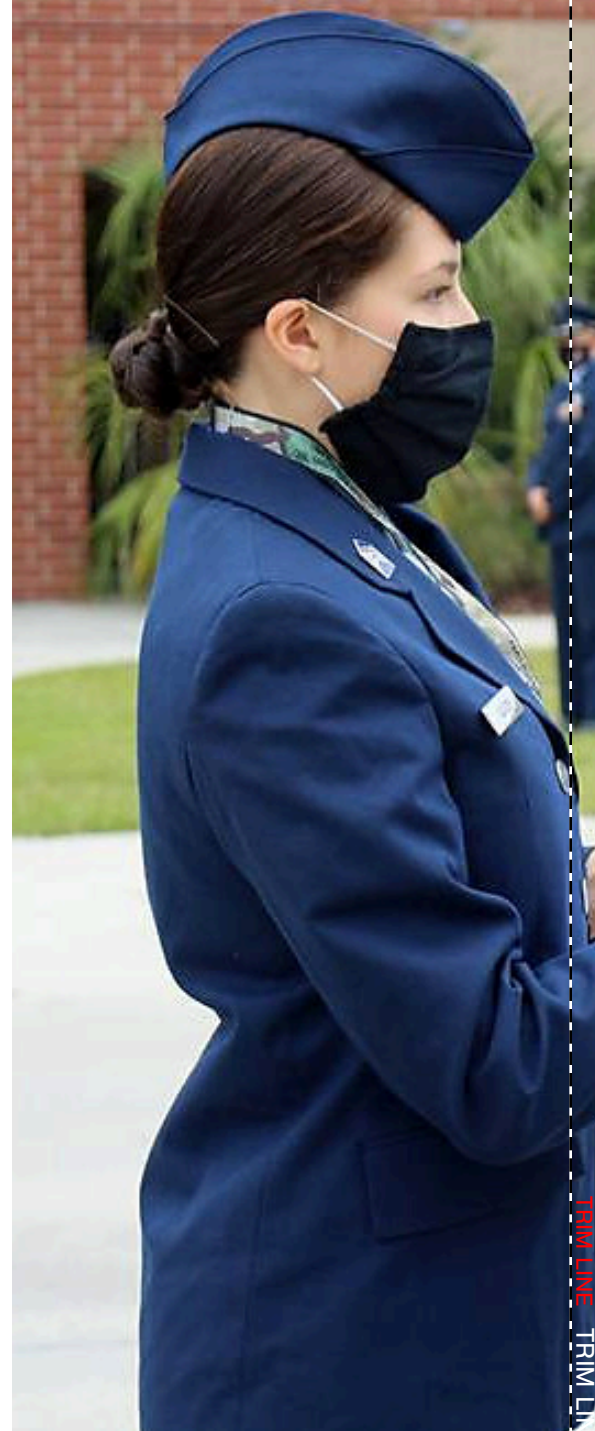
"[It's helped me with] teamwork, like [knowing how to] work together," Leiker said. "[I know how to] deal with leadership now."

The ROTC program is one of the largest and most diverse in South Carolina, with over 100 cadets and eight different teams. Students can work their way up to leadership positions similar to the actual military. Achieving higher rankings doesn't come without the teamwork and perseverance. For students like Causey, that environment embodies what she and her uncle-sought out.

"[ROTC] is a community, 100 percent." Causey said. "It's like a second family to me."

**Story by Sydney Lewis
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SERVING THE FUTURE

ROTC students find benefits in program for career futures



"I am probably going to continue it through high school or through college, and then probably join the Army National Guard. I have spoken to some sergeant that can recruit me. So I will probably be trying out for the Minuteman Scholarship, which is the officer force. Some long term future goals, definitely try something to aim within the field of psychology, maybe go into criminal justice or something."

Alexis Manocchio, 12

NATIONAL GUARD



"After high school, I am trying to get an Army scholarship. But I'm hoping for Citadel. After college, I am hoping that I can get the Army scholarship so I'll have to do four years active, four years reserve with the army. Whenever I am done with the Army, I'd like to find some kind of job in political science either as an accountant worker or a state worker."

Jeffery Bellino, 12

ARMY

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