

Why I want to attend Massanutten Military Academy

By Serkalem Thomas

I have attended Massanutten Military Academy for one summer and the second half of my 8th grade school year. At first, I didn't welcome the idea of going to a military school. I had many preconceived notions, such as not having the freedom that you typically would if you went to a public school or a private school. I thought it would be like going to prison. When I arrived at MMA in the summer of 2019, I couldn't believe my eyes. The first thing that I noticed was the cadets who were wearing their white over gray. I was in awe by the sight of them because they were well-dressed, everything about them was meticulous. Ranging from their shiny bates to their slick hair they were well put together. It was quite impressive since normally you don't see kids that well-kept. That summer went by so quickly and before I knew it, I was heading back home. I couldn't stop myself from admitting to my Dad how much I loved being there. I told him I wanted to come back for the school year. Naturally, he asked me to give him my main reasons why I wanted to go back. I told him; during that summer I learned how working with others was crucial, I learned that in just a few weeks the people you meet can become family, I learned how to become more responsible in every way.

We as a company had to do most things together. We succeeded, as a team, and we failed as a team. Whenever a few cadets in my company did something wrong, we all were a part of the consequence. One of the consequences was Physical Training (PT). At first, all of us were mad about PT, but as it went on we learned that the PT wasn't about hurting you or getting you to hate leadership. However, instead, it made you more aware of the girls around you. It forced us to work together and to get each other through the pain. After we PT'd you could see different girls consoling some other cadet or one cadet making a joke that we couldn't help laughing at. What I learned from seeing how the other female cadets behaved was that even though we didn't know each other that well, we still felt compelled to do our best to get each other through, because by that time we knew that we wouldn't make it through this alone.

One of the takeaways that anyone can have when they go to Massanutten is how to be responsible. Life as an MMA cadet teaches you how to take care of your body, your barracks, and your schoolwork. There are some rules regarding your barracks that are questionable. For example, making your bed to the exact inch. Most people would just argue that there is no point to make your bed that neatly if you are just going to use it that same day. Although this is reasonable, I became aware of something else after speaking to Captain Matthews (one of the staff members). If you can't complete something as small as making your bed each morning, how are you going to be able to complete bigger tasks? The answer would be you couldn't.

Everything that we were taught was inspected and if you failed that inspection there would be a consequence. You were required to do everything at 110%, no excuses. With consistency and repetitiveness, discipline can be easily accomplished. Just like Schofield said,

"The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment." I was amazed by how seriously the cadet leaders and adults took the quote because they got us to clean up our acts without having to resort to yelling. They were fair and consistent and soon enough all the cadets, including myself, learned to be more disciplined.

Another thing that I took away is what a true leader was. I was able to witness young cadet leaders at their best. I was able to see that a true leader is someone who makes others follow the rules, but also cares for and understands their subordinates. If there is one thing that I want, it is to be a great leader that people look up to, and I was able to learn that from attending MMA. The other leaders and the leadership courses taught me that there is more to leading than just telling people what to do. Leading is about being able to follow, being honest, consistent, and fair with your subordinates. Your main goal as a leader was to follow through the mission and always take care of your subordinates.

Therefore, the reason why I really want to attend MMA, is that in such a short period of time I have learned so much. I became more mature and learned what a true leader is. My main goal in the near future is to get into a Military Service Academy and then go into the Marine Corps. I believe that attending MMA will help me in the areas that I might be lacking in. It gives me a great opportunity to get better at my academics, and physical capabilities. It also will prepare me for military life, whereas a public or a private school couldn't. Unlike any other school I have attended, I have found a place where I can fit in and make myself useful in a good way. I absolutely love being there and I would consider it my home away from home.