

2024 HIGH SCHOOL VETERANS DAY ESSAY WINNER



Addison Whetstone
Grade 12
Hunter High School

BIO

Addison is the youngest of four girls in a military family. She's a Senior this year at Hunter High School and participates in her schools Dance Company, Play Productions, and Madrigals. She also had the honor of singing in the choir tonight. Addison loves to dance, and has been awarded the Dance Sterling Scholar for Hunter High. Her dad William has been a member of the Air National Guard for the last 19 years. She's so grateful for the Utah PTA and National Guard, and is so excited to receive this award.

ESSAY

My family consists of me, my mom, my dad, and my three older sisters. Two years before I was born my dad joined the Utah Air National Guard, and has been in service for the last 19 years. He now serves as a Master Sergeant and Crew Chief in the 151st Air Refueling Wing. The military has always been a part of my life. From watching my dad go on deployment to watching him speak to my elementary class on career day. I've always admired my dad for being willing to sacrifice so much of his life for our country, but the older I get the more I understand what exactly he sacrificed.

My dad has been deployed a total of 8 times in his career, with all of the deployments

lasting several months at a time. He has missed birthdays, anniversaries, Christmases, and countless milestones in my sisters and my childhood. But even though he was thousands of miles away, my dad always found ways to be there for us.

On my twelfth birthday my dad was gone on deployment, but he set up a scavenger hunt for me to find a present from him. Everytime he was gone over Christmas, there were still presents from him under the tree. And once while he was gone over Covid lockdown, he asked a specific youtube channel that my family watched to give us a shoutout from him telling us that he loved us. He was constantly finding ways to surprise us, while simultaneously fighting for our country's freedom

In a few months, I will turn 18. And not long after that, my dad will retire from the military. He will have been a member of the Air National Guard for the entirety of my childhood. The deployments will stop, the early mornings attending drill will end, and he'll be honored as a retired veteran of the Air Force for the rest of his life. And while I will always be proud of him for serving our country, I'm more proud of the ways that he served me. I'm more proud of him for always thinking of me, and for making my childhood the best it could be, even if he wasn't always there. He's taught me that there's no excuse for not being there for your kids, and I will take that lesson with me as I start my own family.

I'm proud of my dad for what he did in other countries, but I will never forget what he did for me here in West Valley City.