

## 2025 HIGH SCHOOL VETERANS DAY ESSAY WINNER



**John Dzieciolowski Jr**  
**Grade 12**  
**Juan Diego Catholic High School**

### BIO

My name is John Dzieciolowski Jr. I am 17 years old and I go to Juan Diego Catholic High School. My dad works full time in the Army National Guard and he's currently at the Pentagon. My mom, 2 younger brothers and our 2 cats stayed in Utah so I could finish my senior year here. This is our 3rd year living in Utah. I was born in Virginia and I have also lived in Alabama and Michigan. My hobbies include swimming, track, cross country, media club, scouts, and skiing. Next year I plan to go to college and I am interested in biochemistry or engineering.

### ESSAY

**The Military in My Life: Lessons I've Learned**  
By John Dzieciolowski Jr.

Of all the branches and commands my father could have joined during his military career, he chose the Army National Guard. Usually that would be fairly stable, but not for my family. I was born into the military and so far I have moved 5 times all over the US. Growing up, my dad's always been a major part of my life and the reason I am who I am today. He's taught me many things, like how to start a fire, set up a tent, write, do math, and even paint. But most

importantly, he's taught me communication, compassion, and how to adapt.

At every point in life, we interact with others. Whether it's small talk at dinner or a deep conversation with someone important, we feel the need to connect. But this can only happen if each person puts in the effort to communicate and my dad showed me this. Being in the military, he has to talk to people to get things done. Whether it's his boss, who he must be respectful to and report to, or those under him who he guides and mentors, my father must communicate clearly. If not, his words could be misunderstood, and things could go wrong. He showed me communication through his work, always trying his best to get things done and showing how important clear, respectful communication is.

He also taught me compassion. In the military, things can change or go wrong quickly—you can lose someone close or fail a task that affects others. It's easy to feel alone in those moments, but compassion changes that. Sharing the burden with others makes it lighter. My dad showed me this through his actions. He feels what others go through and does his best to support them. I've learned to do the same. When my friends struggle, I try to be there for them, even if I don't fully understand, because that connection matters most.

Lastly, he taught me to adapt. Military life means constant change—new places, new people, new challenges. For me, it was moving. Every new assignment meant another state, new friends, and another chance to start over. It was hard, but my dad made it seem like an adventure. He told us we'd meet amazing people and have great experiences, and that helped me see change as something positive. He taught me to be happy with what I have but ready for anything new, and to be grateful for both. Because of him, I've learned resilience and flexibility—skills I'll always carry with me.

In conclusion, the lessons my dad has taught me—communication, compassion, and adaptability—have shaped who I am today. And that's what veterans do: they teach by example. We honor them not only by remembering their service, but by living out the lessons they've given us. If we follow their example, we can become stronger people and build a better world.