2026 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VETERANS DAY ESSAY WINNER



Katy Lynn Arnold
Grade 4
Sunrise Elementary School

BIO

Katy Lynn C. Arnold was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, on February 20, 2017. At a young age, her love of reading resembled the likeness of our third president, Thomas Jefferson in his youth, reading any and all books available. She had other interests as well such as painting, photography, building simple crafts with her dad, and sewing dolls' clothes.

Presently, she is a fourth grade student in the SALTA program at Sunrise Elementary. Katy Lynn is the oldest of three siblings, with a sister Evie Lynn (5), and brother Kallyn (1), who she considerately watches over. She is involved in extracurricular activities such as swim team, dance, choir, and chess club. When Katy Lynn grows up, she hopes to be an interior designer for the mars space station.

ESSAY

America 250 and Me: What My Military Connection Means to Me

America has a military to protect the freedoms given to us by the U.S. Constitution. I am proud that my father serves in the U.S. military, but service comes with challenges. He inspires me to find little ways to serve as well. We both love our country.

To understand why we have our military, we must first understand the meaning of freedom. My definition of freedom is making our own choices without anyone else deciding for us. We have a military to protect the citizens of our country from other countries that want to take away our freedom. One of the freedoms that could be taken away is our freedom of speech. Without the freedom of speech, we could be silenced and not be able to communicate our ideas freely. In some countries people get arrested for saying things that the government does not like. Thankfully, when talking to my dad on the phone, I can say whatever comes to mind and not worry.

My father is often away from home, so we do not get to see each other all the time. While serving away from home, he misses special events like birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and things that happen once in a lifetime. However, there is modern technology that connects us. We video chat almost every night. He also films videos while reading stories aloud. We can pretend it is really him at home on the couch reading bedtime stories to us. Those are two good ways we overcome feelings of separation while he serves our country.

This year, I found a couple of ways to serve my country. I helped put up some of the flags at the Utah Healing Field next to Sandy City Hall. The reason for the healing field was to honor the 2,977 people and first responders who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I also danced in a Veterans Day performance. I performed twice, once in public at Utah's Hogle Zoo and once for veterans at Dimple Dell Recreation Center. Service to my country makes me feel good and like an even better American. I love this feeling, so I will continue to serve my country in the future.

America is turning 250 this year, and I am happy to play even a small part in its story. My father's service in the U.S. military, protecting our country, makes me feel strong. I love my father, and I will continue finding ways to serve my country as a loyal American.