



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

CONTEST
WINNERS

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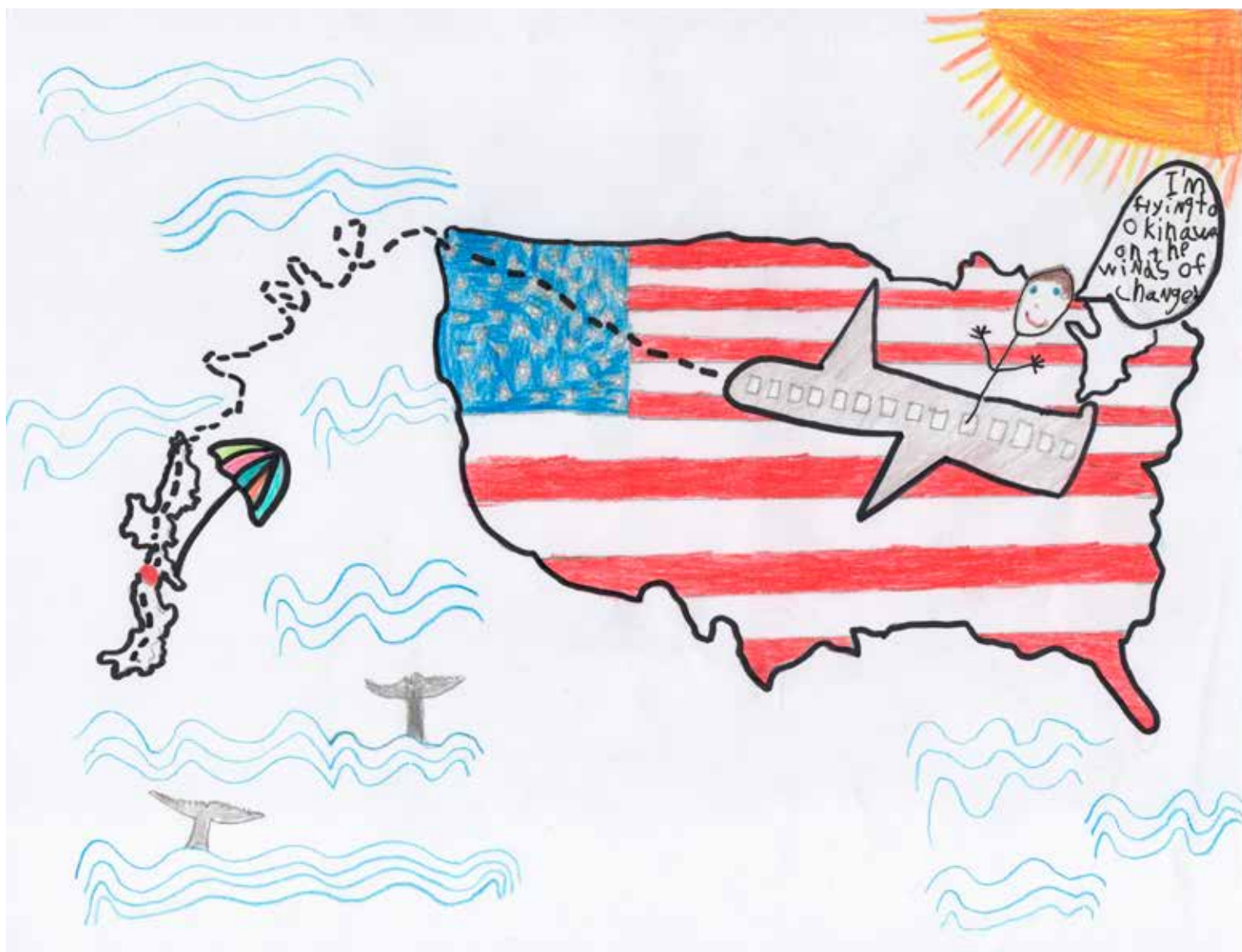


Created By: Ema Lichtfuss, Grade 1, Army



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

Created By: Benjamin Diddams, Grade 1, Marines



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

Created By: Adrielle Pittman, Grade 1, Marines



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

Created By: Evelyn Eskam, Grade 1, Marines



Created By: Danika Eskam, Grade 1, Marines



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Created By: Luke Roberson, Grade 3, Navy



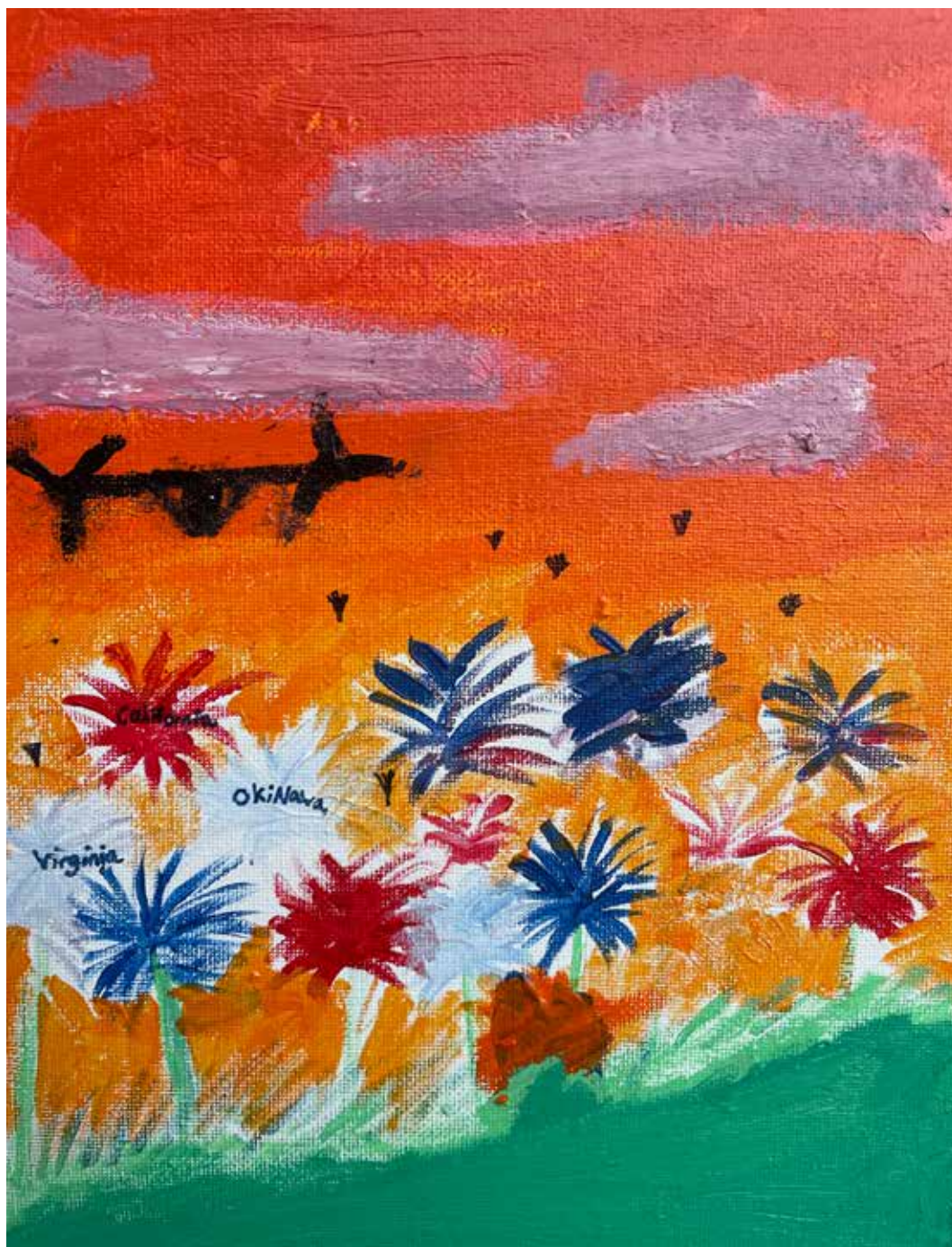
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ARTWORK



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Created By: Caleb Morgan, Grade 4, Marines



ARTWORK

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Created By: Marissa Mireles, Grade 4, Marines



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

Created By: Evelyn Diddams, Grade 5, Marines



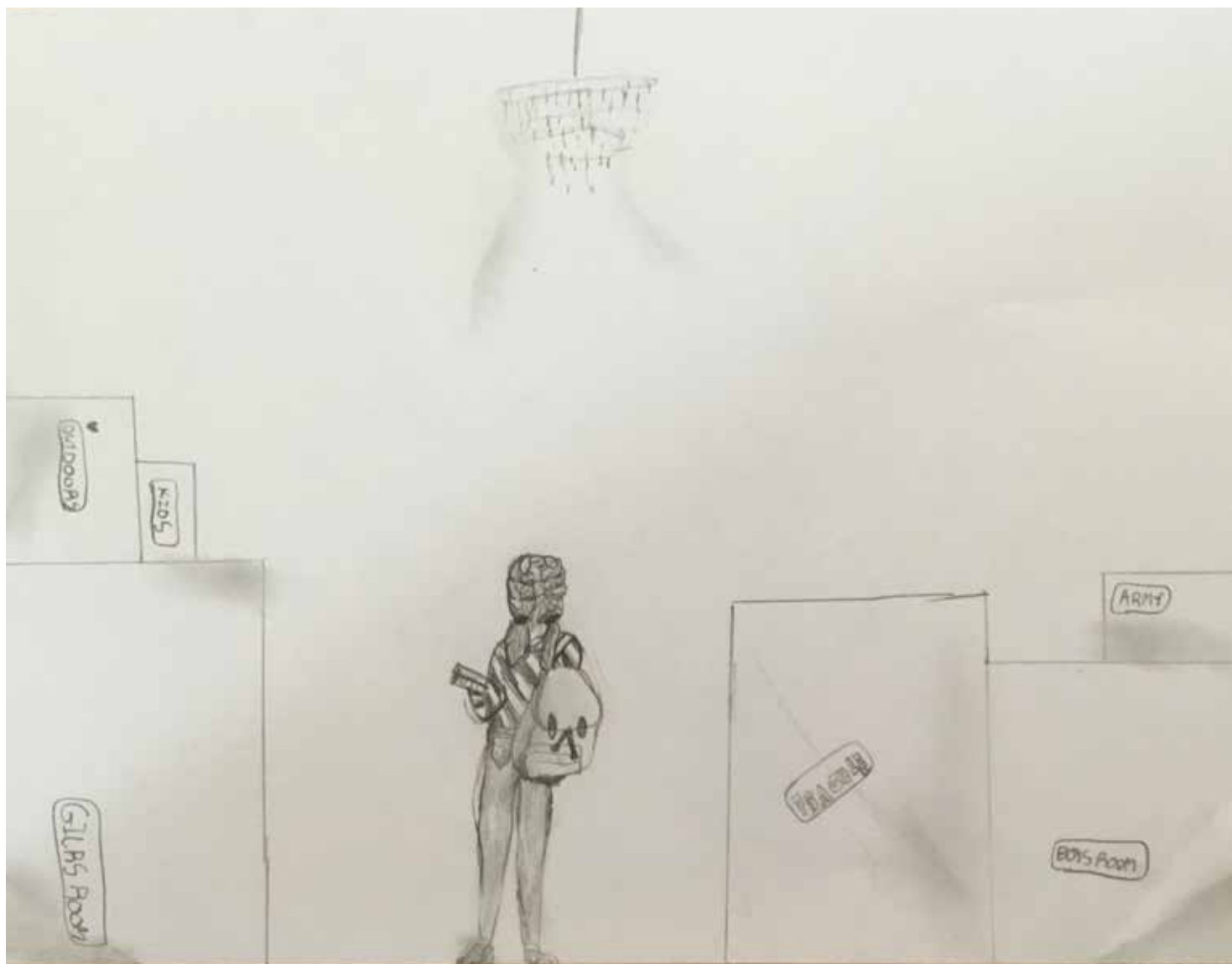
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Created By: Zoie Roberson, Grade 5, Navy



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

Created By: Sarah Knotts, Grade 5, Army



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Created By: Sarah Knotts, Grade 5, Army



ARTWORK

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Created By: Zlayah Mvondo, Grade 6, Army



Created By: Adrielle Pittman, Grade 1, Marines

I feel like being a military child, when my mom said it's different from other children, I felt like it was a bad thing. Then something told me it was not a bad thing. So then I just dealt with it. Making friends as a military child is fun, but is not as easy as it was when I was little. Being a military child can be difficult because I can't have sleepovers with my cousins. I don't like it when my friends move away. I get ready to go to their house, but they have moved away already.

I live in California. I enjoy the eucalyptus trees.

I moved to California when I was three. I remember living in a house with stairs. I personally love stairs. I did not like moving from Oklahoma away from my family to live in California. I have a lot of cousins in Oklahoma. I started to meet great friends here in California, Karsyn, Melanie, Tessa, Lacey, Ava, Rosie, Heidi, Greta, and Rose. Meeting all my new friends made me feel like I was at home. We played and talked a lot. I met grandma Wilma. She treated me wonderfully. She was my California grandma. I met Miriam, she is the best babysitter. I met a lot of wonderful adults, sometimes they feel like aunties. Their names are Autumn, Yessica, Amy, Darla, Mrs. Ashley, Mrs. Courtney, and Mrs. Kirby. Michael Wilson and Mr. Chaz were very kind.

Some of them moved away, some of them didn't. I can deal with it, because I still have their phone numbers and can call them. I don't like it when the people that feel like my new family have to move away because of the military. It's like when your grandma has to move away. It feels like misery.

I have my friend Lacey that I can chill and talk with. That helps me to deal with so many of my friends moving away.

I'm involved with Awana and I like reading my Bible. There is some interesting stuff in it. I like recognizing the scriptures. I have a better relationship with God and I am learning how I can abide with Him more.

I started going to little learners when I was 3. I liked it. It was very fun and I made a lot of friends. I loved my teacher Mrs. Miros. I loved everything about her. I really can't explain it. She was the best teacher. I learned a lot in little learners, and now I am very smart. Now I really enjoy books about topics that I like and enjoy. I loved circle time. Now I am in the homeschool clubs and I love them. They make me feel like I get to say I'm going to school. I really love my teachers. Everything about them is good. I am learning a lot in the sports and art clubs. I hope they continue.

ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Maddy Peterson, Grade 2, Marines

Will the winds of change blow?
Inspiring me to grow, I will miss you.
Nothing stays the same,
Don't be afraid.
Soon I'll see you again.

One of us left.
Fear not the winds of change, best friends we are.

Cherish our old memories.
Hold on tight,
As best friends we will navigate the winds of change.
Never forget, change is part of life.
Get ready to have fun again.
Embrace the winds of change.



Maddy P.

ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Benjamin Skaggs, Grade 2, Marines

Hi. My name is Ben Grant Skaggs. I am a military child because my dad is a marine. I move from place to place because my dad gets stationed there. Well... I used to live on Camp Pendleton on ocean side. On some weekends me and my family went to the beach to have fun. I moved away and the desert and it was really fun but in the summer it can get over one hundred degrees. The change was interesting fun. The thing thing that wasn't fun and interesting was a long drive. I hope we can move again!

Created By: Mason Wolf, Grade 3, Air Force

The Winds of Change

Blow the winds of change.
Adventure whistles in the winds of change.
New places, new bases
Thoughts wonder in the winds of change.
Will I be accepted or rejected?
Distance whimpers in the winds of change.
I'm sad to be missing my dad.
Gratefulness worships in the winds of change.
Praising Him, we are together again.
Blow the winds of change.

Created By: Evelyn Diddams, Grade 5, Marines

Winds of Opportunities

When I fly on wings of change, it can be hard, scary, and difficult. The hotel that awaits me is cramped, stuffy, and boring. In a hotel, it is a trial to make new friends, as I most often just sit around. Therefore, I get lonely with no friends to keep me busy. It is always some time before we meet new people. I greatly miss my family and home, where I knew friends, teachers, and school-mates. I absolutely abhor unpacking; movers in and out of my house is quite the ordeal. Even worse, before I was homeschooled, I had to switch schools, which always terrified me. Although change brings hardship, moving to new places offers new adventures and opportunities.

My experience as a military child has helped with the changes of moving; I've learned to make the best of every situation. I moved to Japan when I was seven years old. During my trip to Tokyo, I dressed in a traditional kimono with my Japanese friend, Kiki, and we walked around town. In order to travel around Japan, we took advantage of riding the Shinkansen, also known as the bullet train, which is the fastest train in the world. At Japanese resale store, we loved the impossibly low prices. The Japanese culture truly set them apart from anywhere else we have lived. We appreciated their centuries old castles immensely, as they were different from American historical landmarks that I have seen like the Washington Monument and The White House. Most of their foundations were twenty to thirty feet high, and they were all handmade. It was spectacular. We also fed koi fish in the garden ponds all over the country. In Iwakuni, we scoured the beach for sea pottery, which is unique to Japan. Now, here in North Carolina, we appreciate the change of hunting for shark teeth. When we move to Okinawa this summer, I am looking forward to the singular opportunity to go ziplining through the jungle.

Since 2012, when I was born, my family and I have been taking advantage of wherever we are. We used the location of San Diego, my first duty station, to visit their famous zoo, Disneyland, and the beaches. Additionally, when we moved to Annapolis, Maryland, which was the nation's first capital, we were able to see the Naval Academy. During our time in Quantico, Virginia, we were close to family, therefore we saw them quite a bit. Likewise, my fourth home in Iwakuni, Japan, provided the chance to see the Kintai Bridge and its cherry blossoms. While living there, we went to other cities in Japan like Nara and Kyoto. In Nara, we fed their sacred deer, and one even stole my younger brother Silas' bagel right out of his hand! He was so surprised. During our once-in-a-lifetime trip to Kyoto, we were able to visit the famous Golden Pavilion known as Kinkakuji. We now live back in the USA, where we traveled to Mt. Vernon to see George Washington's old home this past summer. Over the course of eleven years, we have used the opportunity to fly on the winds of change by taking advantage of wherever we are.

Created By: Juliette Spallino, Grade 6, Army

Flying on the Winds of Change: The Life of a Military Child

I love having the experience of being a military child, because it makes me stronger, adaptive to new situations, more willing to move to different places, and more open to making new friends.

When you're in the military you travel a lot more than you would if you weren't. I am so glad that I have the chance to do that. Being able to see new things, and explore new places makes me happy. Being a military child has made me open to traveling and moving around a lot more. My family and I go on adventures a lot. We got to see the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, and so much more. We make great memories along the way. We also make great friends along the way.

I have friends in a lot of different places, and sometimes I can visit them if they are close by, but I can still connect with them if they aren't. I use messenger kids to call and text my friends that are far away. I'm open to making new friends and so are the other military kids, even if I won't be around for very long. I am open to making new friends that are different from me. Maybe they're from a different country or look a little different, but that doesn't bother me. I love that the other military kids know what I am going through, because even though it is cool to see new things, it's also hard to move away from my friends, and I love that they are still willing to connect with me.

I love that the military community is so kind and they're just so friendly. The community is so supportive as well. We did summer sales, we were selling drinks and homemade bracelets and earrings, and so a lot of the people that came by gave us tips, and some people stopped by just to give us tips. A couple of people came almost every day that we did it. They were just so kind and supportive of our little business.

I just love how kind and supportive the military families are, and I am so grateful that I get to experience so many things, and even though some of them are hard sometimes the hard things can help you become stronger. I love being able to travel, make new friends, and meet new people. Being a military child means so much to me.

Created By: Sydney Morgan, Grade 7, Marines

Wind's Course

Some call them the winds of change
I prefer typhoon
My life is just as varying
As the phases of the moon

Daddy and the changing winds
Are quite well acquainted
In his happy, hardworking heart
They're embraced instead of hated

He's had to leave us quite a lot
Always people to save, wars to be
fought
But the longer he gets to stay
The more it hurts when he goes away

The world knows his sacrifice
Oh, but what of mine
All the hundred tears I've shed
All the many times I've cried
Just when I start to settle in
We're off on another move again
House-hopping many times
I'm no stranger to saying goodbye

Sometimes I try to fight the winds
Not willing to let go
But, I always end up facing forward
Riding with the flow

But, then, perhaps it's better for me
Than an idle life of pure consistency
I'm the better for each one of my trials
Maybe that makes it all worthwhile

Some people seem to be just stuck
Nothing to do, sitting ducks
They stand with their eyes
glued to the floor
If they cared to look up,
they'd see so much more

Like me, they'd see
winds of change are blowing
And through the clouds,
the sun is showing
My joy doesn't depend on knowing
Precisely the wind's course

Created By: Rachel Knotts, Grade 7, Army

I Am a Military Child

My dad comes and goes all the time
But when he returns i know he is mine
I grew up nowhere
But i belong everywhere
We moved many times and even very far
And every place leaves a scar
It's not easy but i love every season
Because it brings me purpose and reason

Created By: Ireland Heatherly, Grade 8, Army

The Unknown of Change

Winds of change someone wise once said,
Just as so, we change too.
Changing places and friends
However, we must not forget the memories we made.
Yes, it may be hard to leave
But many new things are waiting for you.

It's hard, trust me, I know,
But if you never leave, what less will you know?
They said "You'll make friends, you have to try."
I just sat there and denied.
Unaware of my next adventure, I had fear.
However, now me sitting here
I am glad and
All thanks to my mom and dad.

They are the reason as to why I'm here
I feel no treason, only grateful.
As before this I was a little hateful.
Living overseas is not as bad as it seems...
New places and people you would have never met
If you had not left.

Luckily for me,
This has been a dream come true
Being able to see the things rarely anyone else sees
Doing things no one else has is truly magical
This lifestyle is truly
An opportunity of a lifetime.



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ESSAY

Created By: Marlie Fanning, Grade 10, Army

In July of 2022, my dad deployed overseas to Romania for nine months. My dad's deployment has been a large challenge for me and my family. Though this is the longest he has been away recently, my dad often takes military trips for shorter amounts of time. Throughout my life, I have overcome my dad being gone by calling and texting him frequently, as well as reminding myself that the Army is keeping him safe. On the other hand, the Army has changed my life for the better. I know how to approach many kinds of situations and I am resilient. Having to make new friends and work with new people is not hard for me. This will benefit me extremely in the future, as I will have to encounter new people in any workplace. The military has changed my life positively, by teaching me every day.

I moved to Hawaii in 2015. At this point in my life, I had no idea what I wanted to study or what career I wanted to pursue. I have lived in many places, but no place impacted my educational and future goals like Hawaii. In fifth grade, I had the opportunity to be a Special Olympics mentor. I ran track with special needs children at my elementary school and loved helping these kids. I then discovered a passion to work with children with special needs as a career. Since the Special Olympics event, I have wanted to study occupational therapy. If the military had never moved my family to Hawaii, I would have never found my desire to be an occupational therapist. I have been working to find college programs across the U.S. that have a pre-occupational therapy program. The military has helped me discover my educational goals and my aspiration to be an occupational therapist.

Being a military child, I have learned many things. All the things I have learned are very important, yet the most important aspect I have learned is that it is important to be a person others can rely on. Not only do I have to face change, but all of my friends and peers do as well. All of my friends and peers have parents who are gone often and may be going through a draining PCS. It is important to be a friend at all times, and a friend who can support others. Military life is hard, but we can all get through it and have fun if we have supporters and friends around us.

Being a military kid has challenged me, but has also taught me much. It has changed me to see others and recognize how I can support the people around me. These challenges have made me resilient and adaptable. The military has given me many opportunities and experiences I am grateful for and it has impacted who I am as a person. I know how to face any challenge I endure, and how I can effectively reach all of my educational goals and future aspirations. The challenges, hard times, and change is what makes up the beauty of military life, and the lessons I've learned will stick with me forever.

Created By: Brianna Roth, Grade 11, Coast Guard

I feel that I should be so grateful for everything that my father has given me. The opportunities that I was allowed to experience with being a military child... Some days I didn't "fly" I felt like I was standing still in a fog of smoke. Not being able to see what my future held for me. We grow every time we move, we change, we adapt, we become numb. So how did I "fly"? Being truthful here, I don't really know. I kept moving and kept my head up, kinda just seeing everyone grow up together whilst I had to grow up mentally at a ripe young age. Wind... a perfect thing that any military child can connect with. We go with the flow because that's all we grow up knowing. I always asked why I was so different compared to everyone else. Why I acted differently when I lost friends or just didn't care to put effort into something. It's because we learned that nothing is stationary, everything keeps moving like the Earth.

I see the world differently, not only did I grow up moving like any other military kid but I grew up with my hispanic mom and my dad in the coast guard, my brother dealing with many bad things at a young age. I went with it. I kept going. I fought... I like fire. Why? Because I see myself in it. When I see flames I see myself and the power I hold. With the feathers of a bird flying I can't get too close to that fire because just like Icarus, I would burn up. Getting too close to the sun not knowing the limits. Maybe that's a good thing. Skies the limits right?

The military is basically my second family that I have, every time I would move and meet new people they would basically become a part of an extended family. Without my actual family and extended family I wouldn't have the power to keep going. Although, yes I had a lot of help from the people around me, I would say that I would push myself harder than anyone would. I pushed myself to be the very best every time I had to adapt when I moved. I don't think anyone realizes how difficult it is when you have to leave your old life behind. It's basically like a restart in a game. When I moved to Europe I faced a lot of challenges, especially trying to understand the languages that were spoken. As I went on though it got so much easier, getting along with the cultural differences of everyplace. An example is Puerto Rico, there were a lot of things they did that I had never seen before like during New Years you have to go inside because people start shooting into the air. Another thing about Puerto Rico was having to go along with the hurricanes. I didn't have an experience like I did in Puerto Rico.

Quick Story: Hurricane Maria hit. I woke up to a bang, seeing my dad and brother trying to keep the doors closed and my mom trying to keep the water out. I went with it, this was my normal I guessed. It basically turned into the zombie apocalypse afterwards. No lights, no sound, nothing. The only thing you could hear was the raindrops and falling of tree branches. It was so hot but so cold. My mom, brother, and I were evacuated out

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of Puerto Rico to Florida. The trucks transporting us to the plane made me feel special but nervous. I had to leave my dad because he couldn't come with us. I was nervous that people were trying to hijack our truck because we had generators. We got to the plane and there again I had to restart everything again.

My life is just a big game. I start then restart. I never had to stay in one place to really get to know everyone. I'm not ungrateful but numb to caring if I get moved. It is a part of my life and I wouldn't want it any other way. To answer the question, I just go with everything, go with the flow and keep pushing because I know I'm going to do great things with these experiences. Going closer to the sun may get my feathers burned while I fly with the wind of change but at least I'm pushing myself to be at the top.

Created By: Alyss Valerio, Grade 12, Marines

As I start my watches timer, the gun goes off, and I'm running from my fears of the past, for that release, and to see that smile on my dad's face at the end. My heart hammers in my head while my heart beats a mile a minute as I move to that finish line at 3.1 miles. The sun beams on my beautiful black skin as mud splashes onto my legs, but the crossing of that finish line is what I long for, to feel free. Yet, happy moments aren't everlasting, and now it's my turn to face that hill head-on with all I have.

Around the age of two, a tragic series of events unfolded, culminating in my parent's divorce and the court's determination to grant my dad sole custody. It wasn't easy raising a 2-year-old daughter at the age of 28 on his own. While a truly loving father, a military man often forgets that little girls aren't meant to be treated as warriors in training. Life lessons were articulated in barked orders rather than moments of tenderness, but the word "sorry" was not too far behind.

Even with a great childhood with just a father as a parent, I could never get over the thought of me being a possible reason behind the divorce. I sprint from that fear because I am a coward and can't face that truth, at least not yet. But as a marines daughter, I sure as hell can run this race ahead.

All I want is to finish, but I can't. My legs ache, my arms don't push me as they should, and I'm mentally exhausted; I'm tired, but all I need to do is finish this hill, and it's all an easy road ahead, but why is it so challenging, why is it so difficult to face the truth?

Avoiding the pain and holding on to the only thing I have left of my mother—hate, I avoid the problem as long as possible. Ignore the hill, and life will go on smoothly, right? Wrong, another hill is ahead, one steeper, demanding all I have to give, so I push forward because what else can I do? I need to finish so I face the inevitable truth that is to come.

My mind flashes back years to that long, slow drive in my dad's silver Toyota Tundra. It was the moment when I realized why the picture-perfect black-Hispanic family split. An emotional hostage for so long, I allow my dad's words to permeate the hard exterior I've perfected to protect myself from the pain. Like little bullets, my mom's indiscretions pierce my heart one shot at a time. Never having a chance to form a real mother-daughter relationship with my mom, I hoped that maybe there was at least that spark that all children

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have with their mothers, but that idea was ruined as his story unfolded. Anger plagued me; although I realized I wasn't the reason for the divorce, I realized that my mother was never the mom I longed for. Instead, God gave me a father that made up for that hole my mother left in me. The hate that filled me and weighed me down for so long was finally lifted off me to move on.

Past events are lifted off my shoulders, and I'm now lighter; my heart is pounding, my head throbbing, and my mouth craving a cup of cold water, but I'm finally up the hill. My dad is there on the other side of that finish line, his arms open wide, all I have to do is run, and I'll be right there. I run until I'm in the warm embrace of my father. I've faced my fears, ran through my past, and ran that hill like the kick-ass marines daughter that I am to be able to say I've moved on.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Isabella Eastridge, Grade 11, Army

The winds of change are an integral component for the lives of many military children, shaping their own growth and development. But in my experience, they haven't been too vigorous for my own family. Even as such, there are a multitude of other changes brought by different winds I experienced as my dad was deployed in the U.S. Army. There was but one wind that had us settle in San Antonio, Texas- which was where I did most of my own growing. With a childhood filled with facetimes, audio-video recordings of my favorite books, and care packages, there were many sacrifices made on many fronts.

Additionally, there were many adaptations that had to be made for us, as a family, to 'fly' though. In the face of uncertainty, the rest of the family became even closer as we awaited the return of our hero. The winds of change are an opportunity for growth, ultimately. That of which we must accept as we grow through them. Staying strong as a family and maintaining hope is what will help to persevere through any wind, no matter how strong. As with the changing of the weather-, we must be prepared to grow with the direction of the wind, wherever it may go.

Created By: Claire Neville, Grade 12, Marines

How do I fly on the “Winds of Change?”

Point, flex, pivot, and bend. My life has been full of these since before I can remember. I hear stories of how as a baby, I would throw my legs up, toes touching the forehead, while wearing the widest and brightest of smiles. “Awww, how cute,” family and friends would exclaim, just knowing one day, my agile limbs would be put to good use. Sure enough, at age 5, I was enrolled in a small recreational class. “Pizza feet” (first position) and bright pink tutus swarmed the room during recitals while adoring parents swore in their hearts they had born the next Prima Ballerina. “You ought to put Claire in dance at the studio,” one woman expressed to my mother. “Claire is really good! She is SO flexible.”

Onward and upward to the studio, I went. Pivoting, turning, flexing. Life was good for a year until I learned that my father had to leave home for a year. “But....why?” is all I could say. I’m sure that my parents explained something to me about being in the military...deploy overseas...blah, blah, blah. I didn’t even know what all of that meant. What even is the military and what does that have to do with my dad being gone. Life had always been happy, comfortable, and stable and here I was being thrown into a world I have never known in 6 years of being alive. When did this military change come about? Were other children’s parents in the military? At the time, we didn’t live on base or in a military only environment, so nothing could prepare me for this change...

...or the next one.

Four years after my father’s deployment, “the military” now told us that we ALL had to move to North Carolina. “But....why?” still the only words I could form my mouth to say? How could I leave the only city and friends I have ever known and move so far away? What would life be like when I got there? How would I fit in?

Point, flex, pivot, and bend. Being pliable and flexible was something I had only done on my terms for ten years. It was something that brought me joy and peace in doing what I was gifted to do. I never imagined that my gift would be required as a mode of survival to fit in, make new friends, and navigate uncharted territory. As the hot, humid, bug-filled North Carolina air snatched our breath while greeting us with an awkward hospitality, I began to subconsciously point, flex, pivot and bend to find my place in my new setting.

And yet again, another change...deployment. New school. New home. And another move. Change seemed to be more of the norm than consistency did. And with each and every change came point, flex, pivot and bend.

Moving to Maryland right before the pandemic gave me just enough pause to examine my life as a military child. Early in life, I had always pointed, flexed, pivoted, and bended to the praise and adoration of others, but it cost me nothing. As the military exposed my family to changes, I used this

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natural ability, metaphorically and it cost me my identity. The peace I had once enjoyed when using my gift in the studio was now replaced by a fleeting sense of calm. It was just enough to inoculate me against the fear of change, a racially biased culture, and the judging eye of a new host of peers who considered me the “cool black kid”. I aligned my political voice to theirs; wore the North Carolina plaid and jeggings; constantly fretted over my hair being straight enough to look like “them”. I did not even like the one or two other black girls in my school who had the AUDACITY to enjoy their blackness! How dare they not understand the importance of earning the praise of the judging eyes?

Now, I know who I am. I have built of community of friends who hold space for me as a military child and as an individual. We respect each other’s thoughts, culture, experiences, gifts, and voice. We understand that even in holding space for each other, there is still room for one’s self to be the uniquely designed force in this world created by God for a great purpose. I am truly grateful for my life lessons—both in the studio and through being a military child. As I launch into this next chapter of my life, I embrace the change, being fully me and using my gifts for a greater purpose.

Onward and upward.



Created By: Ella Parsons, Grade 12, Army

Nervous. Tired. Worried. These feelings swarmed through my head as I entered, yet again, a new school. As a child of a soldier, I was often confused as to why my life was so different from my current friends and classmates. I was constantly questioning my life's progression; why was I changing schools every few years? Why was I immersing myself in a new culture every few years? Why didn't I have a place I could call home? I wondered; why was my dad gone for up to a year and a half at a time? Why was my mom constantly crying and praying? Why would my friends' moms collapse on the floor in shock when two men would come to their doorstep in their dress uniforms carrying a folded flag? Through all my confusion and stress, I gained a unique sense of resilience.

I've noticed the differences in the struggles in my peers' lives now, versus what they are in military communities. Military kids tend to have a much more broad perspective than civilian kids. My friends now complain when they have to go out of town for a weekend, while most of my childhood friends had to worry about if their parent(s) were going to come back from deployment. At a young age, I learned the concept of death and accepted the fact my dad could have to leave for months at a time and might not return. Military kids go through exceedingly different struggles than civilian kids, which gives us the upper hand in many situations to become more resilient socially and emotionally.

Military kids usually tend to cling together because we have similar lives and experiences.

For most of my life, when I would go to school on a post, I would immediately be pulled into a friend group. I knew it would be harder to make friends and adjust because most of my peers had been in the same school system since kindergarten, but I didn't realize how difficult it would be.

It was a great test of my social skills and resilience having to introduce myself to most people since meeting new kids was more foreign to them. Some PCS' have been easier than others, but by the end of my time in each place, I had gained an experience that helped me become who I am. Whether that be learning a new language, meeting new people, experiencing new cultures, or just living in a new area.

In my life, I've attended six schools, lived in five states, and held residence in two countries. Being a military kid has allowed me to travel to thirty-two countries within five continents. I have had a unique life and an added ease to adjust to any environment and find my place with any group of people. My existence as a child of a soldier has shaped who I am as a person and has made me resilient in every aspect of my life.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Luke Mejia, Grade 12, Coast Guard

Born in Texas, but not to stay
Moved around every four years, around April or May
Maryland and Virginia, places I've called home
Different faces, different friends, always filled with unknown

My father, a coastguard officers, instilled in me
Values that guide, a solid decree
I'm grateful for their love and sacrifice
Even when dad was away, mom sufficed

But now I'm at the top of my class
Graduating soon, with change coming fast
Trying to decide where to go to college
A decision that fills me with both hope and knowledge

How do you fly on the "Winds of Change?"
When life's path is uncertain and strange
With courage and grace, I'll chart my course
And trust that I'll find my way, with no remorse

The winds of change may blow me far
But I'll always remember who and where we are
My roots, my values, they'll keep me grounded
As I soar and explore, in a world unbounded

So I'll spread my wings, and take to the sky
With faith and determination, I'll learn to fly
On the winds of change, I'll rise and fall
But with every new adventure, I'll stand tall.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Kacy Kirby, Grade 12, Coast Guard

The Coast Guard's Kid

Hi, my name is...

75 hours, over 75 hours of my life spent in a car moving from state to state.

Where did you move from...

Four different states, 7 different homes, and countless stray friends throughout the country.

Your dad's in what branch...

The constants in my life are my mom, dad, and brother. I used to assume that moving is a consistent part of people's lives, but since I've moved to this tiny town in Texas, I've found that to be untrue. There are some children who have never moved.

It's nice to meet you too...

That seems so peculiar, for someone to never experience the feeling of an empty house. For someone to not know what that smells like. To not find new friend groups that feel almost like the same people from the last move.

What's your favorite...

It's funny to me how people have a way of arranging themselves. Somehow, some way, they have managed to create individual people everywhere that are all different, but they are all one and the same. They are all good. If they were to meet, they would be good friends. But they don't get to meet each other. I do, and I treasure that gift.

Why are you here...

These beautiful people, however, are scattered about. You need to really look to find them. In the search, it is common to run into what I call carriers. They carry their sadness and their bad feelings. They spit their venom in my direction, not always hitting their target but getting close, teasing and taunting.

You're kinda weird huh...

Over time it has come to my attention that those kinds of people have a lot of struggles in their life. The pain that they experience is hard to deal with, so they do what's easiest and carry it to spread out among others. I am blessed with a happy, and strong family. I am thankful I am not a carrier. Regardless of what they may say to me, I treat carriers with kindness. After all, that little bit of joy may be the only joy they receive that day.

What's that noise you make...

I make noises. I don't mean that figuratively or anything, I quite literally make noises and jerking movements from time to time. I have Tourettes. I have found it is easier to let people think you are just a little strange and politely not address them instead of telling them right away. They treat you differently if you do, I've found.

What's wrong with you...

But the winds of change carry me on to new places, with new people. Some are good, some are carriers, but all have a reason for being in my life. I treasure everyone and every lesson I have learned on my journey of being a military child.

Do you want to be friends?



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Nikoles Gilmore, Grade 12, Navy

Within the winds of change, there are the seeds of rebirth. From one generation to the next, one state to another, I am a continuation of the last. From North Carolina to Texas, and from Texas beyond, I am the same dandelion born to impermanence 17 years ago. As a dandelion reproduces, by methods of pollination, I do the same—once I've been fertilized with three insightful years of friendship, culture, and community, I'm on my way to begin a new life in a new place again.

My first time moving was—difficult, to say the least. In the second grade, during lunch, my step-mother sat beside me and allowed me to cry as it finally sunk in—this would be the last time seeing these friends—the friends I had built strong bonds with, the teachers I had befriended, and the familiarity of my community. As I left pools of sadness on my way out, I got to see my favorite teacher one last time. Her name was Mrs. Morgan and she was a kind woman who saw the good in everything. Before I could disappear into the car, she told me I'd be fine wherever I go due to my outgoing personality and my ability to adapt. In her words, "military kids are made to improvise and overcome." As her words resonated within my mind, I felt an ease of tension and anxiety ripple through me. By my fifth time moving, I was no longer crying, but smiling at my armored fate. I no longer felt the cold linger of separation, but the warm embrace of what was to come. I had evolved—genetically modified to do exactly what Mrs. Morgan had the aforementioned—improvised and overcame. If you had asked me twelve years ago how being a military brat was, I would've told you I hated it, but through being a military child, I got to see the world from an entirely different perspective than everyone else. I have been introduced to so many opportunities and gateways many kids my age wouldn't have even imagined existing due to their stationary lives. For example, my parents managed to come by a college preparing course my first year in California by the name of College Bound. The program included scholarship introductions, information regarding how to apply to college, and many more tips on how you can best maneuver high school life to best prepare you for college life. I got to experience leadership roles, responsibility, and accountability from my first year. To say I've learned a lot while growing up is an understatement.

I've grown to become more resilient and optimistic for my future. While moving may have been a stressful situation, like a dandelion, I evolved—I changed in order to survive.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Mollie Lass, Grade 12, Air Force

9/11 – Never Forget. My parents met because of this tragic day, so I feel it is my responsibility to do something of great purpose with being alive. My mother ran for her life at the world trade center, and my father subsequently was deployed to Afghanistan. It was then that they became pen pals for emotional support. Fast forward and since I was ten years old, I knew my professional life plan is to be in the medical field, and for that I am grateful. As I prepare for that next step to commit to the educational path, I have my eye specifically on the profession of Nurse Anesthetist. The depths of this goal is rooted in the pleasure of taking care of others, the ability to stay calm during crises, and a strong stomach. Serving as an intelligence analyst, a flight medic, and a biomedical engineer, my dad spent twenty two years in both the army and air force, acquiring life skills and experiences that he instills in me daily. My favorite skill he has taught me is composure, especially in panic ridden situations. Remaining calm and collected yet strong and diligent during chaos was key for his success in the military, and it is key for me to honor that and make him proud. In fact, I am known by many of my dance troop peers to spring into action when one needed emotional support or to hold back the hair of a sick friend. With laser focus, my career path plan is to first earn a Bachelor's of Science in Biology, followed by a second Bachelor degree in Nursing through FAU's accelerated program. Since I am entering college with 60 credits from AP class work, it will only take me 3.5 years to achieve this goal for a double major. Following graduation, I hope to become a travel nurse for one year before applying for Nurse Anesthetist school, so that I can also experience personal goals of exploring our country to help me figure out where I may want to plant roots as an adult. Some family members have skeptically questioned my focus, suggesting that I am too young to know what I want to be and I should enter college as an undecided major. I agree that as humans, our interests may change, however I do not believe my values of caring for the afflicted will. To curiously validate this assumption, I enrolled in a program for high school seniors that allowed me to both learn about the tools, terminology and best of all shadowing the nurses at work. This immersive experience has given me confidence and determination to reach my goals. A goal without a plan is only a dream and with steadfast focus on the plan I will make that dream a reality.

Created By: Zedriann Carter, Grade 12, Army

For many centuries, humanity has been utilizing natural resources to produce the things that we need. This might include burning coal in factories to create heat or manufacture supplies. You might think this is beneficial to society, but it impacts us negatively in a big way, as burning any type of fossil fuel can cause pollution that harms our environment. We have been doing this for so long that in another decade or so, everything that we need, including water, will be so poisonous that it is unsafe to drink. There needs to be a solution. Where can we find such a fix?

Before that question is answered, let us look further into the problem. Pollution has been an issue for over 2,000 years, making the air dangerous to inhale as the gases from pollution can cause flora and fauna casualties. About 8 million tons of plastic are dumped into the ocean, causing pollution in our water. However, most of our problems come from the harmful gases that we put into the atmosphere. According to Kurzgesagt, 35 billion metric tons of air pollution is produced each year. In 2015, more than 61% of pollution is caused by oil and nitrogen oxides. Additionally, pollution is known to cause 29% of all known cancers. As a result, pollution can cause something called the greenhouse effect.

The greenhouse effect is how heat is trapped close to the Earth's surface by "greenhouse gases." When we do things like manufacture products in a factory, we are covering the atmosphere with hot, dangerous gases like CO₂ that negatively impact our environment. The greenhouse effect is mostly caused by the burning of fossil fuels. Currently, 84% of the world's energy comes from fossil fuels, 33% of those fossil fuels being oil. In addition, China produces more pollution in the world than any other country. Though, some people have been working to stop the greenhouse effect: countries are trying to switch to renewable energy sources. Wind turbines and hydro-powered dams are currently being built in places around the globe. However, there have been many fatal and negative setbacks while going through this process. In the 1975 Banqiao dam incident, a hydropower dam was destroyed by a massive typhoon that caused 85,000 fatalities in this one incident alone. To avoid situations like these, companies have been sticking to the procedure of burning fossil fuels to produce energy. Is there a cleaner and safer way to do this?

In comes Green Chemistry, the healthier way to produce the things that we need. It is the design of chemical products and processes that reduce or eliminate the use or generation of hazardous substances. This type of chemistry produces the things that society needs in a much cleaner method. The only downfall to this is that it is awfully expensive to maintain, but it balances out by making our environment safer. What would green chemistry implementation look like? Well, for starters, certain chemicals would stop being used when something is being manufactured, so there will not be as much pollution as there used to be. If we started using green chemistry right now, the pollution rate would go down 40% due to the absence of nitrogen and carbon in the air. Additionally, the most dangerous substance found in gases produced by pollution is carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide makes up about 80% of pollutant gases, but with the implementation of green chemistry, it is going to disappear within weeks.

Inevitably, humanity will soon reach its downfall. But, even with the slowly approaching end, we can cease all of society's unpleasant habits to make life better for ourselves. With the incorporation of green chemistry, pollution will soon come to a halt, and the greenhouse effect will go down significantly. We need to act as soon as possible. If we come together, we can create a miracle that will guarantee our survival.

Created By: Bethany Journigan, Grade 12, Army

If I Had The Power

If I had the power to ensure that certain academic subjects be protected and funded, I would protect elective classes like music and art. I would also protect history and environmental/animal sciences. In today's world, most focus and funding are put into STEM subjects to match where the world is heading technologically. However, placing emphasis on the other subjects I mentioned could also influence our future in a healthier and more positive way.

For example, music and art classes are the first to get cut, but they are the subjects that bring out people's creativity and help guide them in expressing themselves through different avenues.

On the other hand, while science is a well-enforced academic subject in school, they don't put focus on specific subjects like how our environment and animals have been affected over time and what's happening now. These classes teach you to memorize the facts we know and experiment to find new discoveries. While this type of learning can be necessary, why not focus on environmental science to learn about the world we live in and grow the ability to understand why the changes are happening and work towards a solution to our ecological problems. Another avenue that needs to be enforced is animal sciences. Learning about the creatures we live with is highly important. Without any other living creatures on earth, we would not be able to live the way we do, and more than likely, we wouldn't be able to survive. Instead of putting all our focus and funding into areas like STEM to help advance the societies we live in and the human population as a whole, we need to put that focus on the world we live in now.

This is so important because if we cannot learn about and protect our world and the things that live in it now, what would be the benefit of advancing our technologies? In addition, Even though history is a required course, it is not a primary focus. History is how we came to be where we are; knowing how we got here can help us understand our mistakes and allow for room to change in the future.

What initiated this thought process is me being a military child. Being in the military brings many hardships, but I gained an extensive amount of skills and a different mindset.

Moving around so often at a young age helped me realize that there is so much more for people in the world than just basic things in the STEM field. We can take any route we want and there are so many beneficial subjects and directions that a person can take through school. That's why it's so important to not just focus on subjects schools enforce but also find the way we can each express ourselves and find the future that will make us happy no matter what comes our way.

Created By: Danny Navarro-Maldonado, Grade 12, Army

In the winds of change, I have been blessed. I've made unforgettable memories that I reminisce countless times over the years. Though, I wish I could go back and relive these moments, they taught me to value friendships, places, and cultures. So now that I'm about to graduate from high school, I've grown to adapt wherever the winds blow me.

When we moved to our first military base in Hawaii, I remember coming home from school, and singing a Hawaiian song to my mom. Although I actually forgot the lyrics, I made up random words on the spot while she recorded me. When I listen to it, I always laugh because there are many repeated words. Around the same time, I was going to classes to learn the ukulele with my brother. This was the first instrument I learned, and I remember playing Christmas songs for my grandparents and sounding so bad because my brother and I were not synched. As a result of all this, that's how my music taste developed.

Moreover, my love for sports started in Hawaii, where I'd race to the tetherball courts during recess and challenge everyone to a game. I also made multiple friends by teaching them tactics to get better at the game. Similarly, I started playing tennis with my brother and was always excited to go to practice each day. Since we were a part of a team, we went to some competitions and in one of them my doubles partner and I were the only one's in our team to win a match. From there on, my passion for tennis continued.

Suddenly, from Hawaii we moved to El Paso, Texas, where the landscape transitioned from grass and flowers to sand and tumbleweeds. Despite the contrast from living on an island with the ocean at a close distance to a border city, this taught me that every place has its beauty. Living in that border city let me spend time with bilingual people and allowed me to understand a new culture.

It was three special years that we spent living there, but then the wind blew me again to Houston, filled with diversity and various cultures. This is where I entered my high school, which now I'm about to graduate from. This opportunity also let my dad take on the new endeavor of being a recruiter, where he went to different schools in the area, which included mine. Although it was a bit strange for me to see my dad at my school, I now comprehend the importance of his job to guide interested teenagers to enter a military life.

Contrary to that time, in my last year in high school I am unable to be close to my dad because he is in another mission in the Middle East. Although, it's been a tough time not seeing him, I know that at a distance, he's supported me by doing his job. Now, the wind takes me to college.

ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Nykaela Burks, Grade 12, Army

Strong and resilient,
Military children fly,
On the winds of change,
Without a question or sigh.

From town to town,
A new home we find,
A challenging game,
Being a military child.

Wide-eyed and curious,
We arrive at each place,
Meeting new friends,
Learning at a new pace.

Each day's a new adventure
On this journey we undertake,
Packing up our lives,
No time for hearts to break.

Through the winds of change,
We've learned to adapt,
Making the most of every moment,
Tackling every challenge that's apt.

Friends come and go,
But we always understand,
The price we pay for the privilege,
Of being part of a military band.

With each new move,
We grow a little wiser,
Stronger, and more adaptable,
Through every change and every crisis.

The winds of change,
Have taught us a lot,
We stand tall and proud,
Together we march on.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Jacob Orders, Grade 12, Navy

Being the son of a career Navy Chief can be one of much change. Many military kids are faced with being uprooted from their environment at a moment's notice. Because their environment can be one of instability, moving from one base to another, it is imperative that their home life is stable. My dad, Chief Charles Orders, made it his mission to ensure that our lives were stable no matter what the circumstances were.

The birth certificates. You can always tell the journey of a military man by the birth certificates of his children. My eldest sister was born in Iceland while I was born in Jacksonville. My younger twin siblings were lucky enough to be born here at home in Mississippi. My dad's career forced us to move often, but we grew up understanding our role, too. Although we did not choose this position but were born into it instead, we were tasked with the same responsibility as our father... to sacrifice for the greater good of our country and the livelihood of our fellow Americans. Because we understood that we were blessed with this duty, we were ready to take on this mission as a family.

As a Navy family, you may be uprooted and moved to a base where you are unfamiliar, but there is an additional level of instability added when your dad has to take his turn on a ship for three months or more. There were many times in my life when my dad was in the middle of the ocean somewhere, but no matter how far away from us he was, he made sure to stay involved in our everyday life. Dad understood that in order for us to fly, we must be firmly rooted. It is with this understanding that he made the hard decision to move us back home to Mississippi so that we could have the support system needed while he continued serving our country bravely. This allowed him to focus on his mission for the Navy without worrying about his mission at home. His support system had his back.

The sacrifices by my dad, allowing us to grow up in a stable environment encouraged us to spread our wings and fly. Because of this, I have been able to develop into a young man with a strong sense of identity of who I am and where I come from. Additionally, I have a great understanding of what it means to completely give of oneself to ensure the freedom of others.

These understandings that was taught to me by my father has set me up for great success in the future because I know I have the fortitude to overcome anything life throws at me. I also understand that you should not live your life for yourself, but you should be the best version of yourself in order to create a great life for others.

Created By: Angelo David, Grade 12, Army

Where are you from? This one simple question should not take any more than 5 seconds to answer – but for me it is the most challenging icebreaker.

Being part of a military family, I move every two to three years. I have never chosen one place in particular to call 'home'. One of the greatest challenges of living like this is meeting friends, becoming attached and accustomed to a new lifestyle, only to be told that we are moving to Washington, Kansas, or Salisbury, England. But as you keep moving, eventually you get used to saying goodbye.

Then there are different teachers and curriculums. Sometimes I will be ahead of others since I learned something early, or I will be noticeably behind since I didn't cover the topic yet or I learned it a different way. The first weeks are the most challenging, meeting new people who already know each other, and then working your hardest to catch up in a subject which my previous school hadn't prepared me for. This was especially true when I moved to the UK. Everything was new to me; I had never lived outside of the US. Classes were different, the people, the food, the weather, everything. But in the end it seemed like the only thing that was different was me. This brought me to one conclusion: I was the odd one out and I had to adapt. I paid attention and worked hard in every class, I talked with classmates, made friends and learned all about the British lifestyle. It felt like home until those two years were up and it was time to say goodbye. Again.

Despite all the challenges, I am grateful for this lifestyle. It helped me become the person I am today – adapting to change, developing social skills, making me grateful for the experiences that I get, and preparing me for the goodbye that will eventually come.

So if you ask me where I am from, the answer is going to start along the lines of "Well I'm from a military family so it's kinda complicated".

Created By: Steve Muro jr, Grade 12, Air Force

Temporary Duty

No one tells you the life of a Military Child. No one tells you the friends you'll lose, the fights, the anger, or the disappointment and frustration of being a Military child. The phrase "Home is where the heart is" has never applied to me. More like "Home is where the Air Force puts me". My Dad used to always be on TDY (temporary duty) and would be gone for weeks, or months at a time. We are on TDY too. The Air Force just likes to call it a PCS.

Personal Change of Station. That occurred for me every 3 years. 3 years to say hello and good-bye. I won't write about all the awful things, however, because we "Military Brats" are built stronger than any steel hull of a battleship, or any C-130. We move, and the thrust from every fighter jet blows us in different directions and to different opportunities. We may lose friends, but we just make more. Lightning strikes countless times for Military kids. Opportunities left and right. I do not dwell on my past; I fly to my future. I miss my friends, and my schools in California were better, but I move on. I make the best of every situation I can, rebuilding my foundation every single time. When I move, I'm broken only slightly now and am rebuilt even stronger, waiting for every challenge that comes my way, knowing that I am an unstoppable force of knowledge and experience bred from the United States Air Force. I've taken my adversity with a grain of salt, and await my future. I am ready for my future; the Air Force won't control me anymore. When I move, I'll be free to make my own decisions and stay and move wherever I please, and I know that because of the experience of moving 11 times, that won't be very hard for me. It won't be a rough start, but a clean takeoff. A clean slate for me and others who know and live the military lifestyle. Every time we move, we dig our roots into where we're placed and grow even stronger than where we were previously.

In the fall of this upcoming year, I will be attending the University of Arizona. For the first time in my entire life, I am moving because of my own free will. It may not be my last move for the rest of my life, but it is my first independent move. Through the constant change in my life, I have learned to adapt and evolve to my new environment, and being a military dependent has shown me far more than I could imagine.



ART & ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY

Created By: Yavonne Burton, Grade 12, Air Force

My name is Yavonne Burton, and I am a senior at Clear Springs High School in League City, Texas. My interest lies in computer sciences, preferably video game design. Video game design is my passion and goal for the future, but it did not start that way. I have had quite the journey to find my love for computers/video game design. At the beginning of my childhood, I was not interested in computers. I played video games like every other kid. At that time, I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian.

My parents work for the US Federal Government, and I have moved to several places around the world. Over the last 18 years of my life, I have lived in the following countries outside the United States, England, and Japan, having moved about 9 to 10 times. My love and passion for computer science/video games started when I moved to Japan and has to the present. I lived in Japan for about four and a half years. Japan was a place that opened my mind up to the world of technology. Living in Japan also exposed me to the amazing Japanese culture.

During the first year, I lived next to Mt. Fuji in Fussa, Japan. For the last three and half years of my time in Japan, I lived on the beautiful island of Okinawa. While in Okinawa, I began to explore the world of computer science, which led me to my journey of video game design. The first computer class I took was a coding class at Kadena Junior High School. The coding class is where I created my first video game, and this is also where I became captivated by the world of computers.

After 4 years, my family moved back from Japan to League City, Texas. I continued my discovery of computer science in my freshman year at Clear Springs High. I took the required classes along with Art and Chinese for my language credit. Continuing into my second semester of freshman year the school decided to transfer the student to an online curriculum, because of the Coronavirus Pandemic. So I was required to transitioned from going to a brick and mortar school to taking my classes online from home.

Taking online classes at home continued into my sophomore year, but I would not let the pandemic stop me from continuing my exploration of the world of computer science. While attending my school courses, I choose to build upon my knowledge of computer coding at home in my separate time.

Beginning isolation from the house because of the pandemic allowed me to discover and learn the different aspects of computers at my own pace.

Continuing into my junior year, my classmates and I were allowed to go back to attending classes at Clear Spring High School. I wanted to broaden my knowledge beyond the basics of computer science and venture into more of the creative side. I decided to take computer principles and illustration as an elective along with my general studies curriculum. In computer principles and illustration, I was able to expand my knowledge of the foundation for computer science.

Currently, I am in my senior year and taking my final classes to be a Clear Springs High School graduate as a member of the class 2023. One of the electives I have chosen is a video game design class. In this class,

Continued >

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ART & ESSAY CONTEST

I am working on my first 3D game. It is a challenge, but I am learning and enjoying it. In addition, I was hired by a company named Code Ninja. I have been with the company for three months. My position is instructing children from ages 4 to 14 to code while building their video games.. I get along with my team members and working there has shown me what my future workplace could be. My main goal is to be able to make video games for people to engage, be part of a team, enjoy, and overall have fun.

In video game design is a male-dominated field which comes with challenges. Being a woman, as well as a person of color adds to the challenge. But diversity and gender are not the only problems I will have to face. Video games are always evolving into a more complex form, and the competitiveness of video game companies is very intense. Companies nowadays are getting more and more competitive. And competitiveness means making the best game, having serious deadlines, and making the best quality.

Know that will put a lot of pressure on me, meaning those deadlines and the quality game. It will be challenging, but I believe the 4 years at university will prepare me for the challenges that lay ahead. I believe challenging oneself is a good thing, it helps in process, learning, and problem solving. In addition, it fosters ways of coming up with new ideas.

Before moving to Japan, I thought my goal was leading me to become a veterinarian. But living in Japan sparked my passion for entering the computer science world. I begin to seek out information because of the technological surrounding while in Japan. But my quest to learn about computers continued through my four years at Clear Springs High School. Even though I am graduating high school I know this will not be the end but the beginning of my journey to achieve my goal of working in the computer science field.

For me, a video game is not just a game to me. It is playing out an artist's story that you can experience yourself and with others. Computer science has the fundamentals of programming, graphic design, animation, and so much more. Going into computer science will help me understand and learn how to create those artist stories for people to experience. The knowledge I have gain over the years, has shown me what my worth is and what talents can offer to the computer science field. The challenges of the field will only keep me more motivated to make the best video games the world can play. College is just a continuation of the road to becoming a video game designer and well be a continuation of my journey. Video game design is not just a dream for me is my future.

Created By: Christopher Grace, Grade 12, Marines

Cause and Effect

In the movie Whiplash, the main character, Andrew Nieman, pushes himself to both his physical and mental limits in order to meet his instructors' ridiculous expectations. This was all done in hopes of making a name for himself. I am no Andrew Neimane in any way, in fact, I propose I am a foil to this character. Perhaps this is because I don't have J.K Simmons, the actor for the lunatic instructor, breathing down my neck, but more likely it's due to my upbringing.

Having lived in a military family all my life, a family which used to move after the passing of around three years, I can safely say this took a toll on my character. The negative side of this lifestyle is that you knew that one day everyone you ever befriended you would no longer see on a daily basis, and that a new start is ahead. As a younger child this wasn't so much of a bother, I can't even remember the day that I left the islands of Hawaii or when I departed the Great Lakes of Michigan. It's in the later years that changes become more noticeable. For starters, education. Gaps in my knowledge started to arise, for each state taught materials at different grade levels, forcing me to learn topics such as the months of the year on my own time. Math was easily hit the hardest, likely never to recover. Sports were something I never really wanted to be a part of, let alone clubs, simply due to the fact that when joining said group I had to acknowledge the fact that I would one day have to leave it. I was still forced into sports, likely for the better, yet I didn't push myself to the degree that I should have. Friends were kind of put off, because at max I knew them for three years; the idea of friendships weren't as cemented into me as compared to others.

Now, after this psychological rant, what on earth could I say? The current situation is I've stopped moving. Florida to Massachusetts was the last move my family had to endure, for my father decided to retire from the Marines. We found this out a couple of months ago, and since then I've picked up new hobbies, mainly due to a friend's influence that has me watching classics like 12 Angry Men and 2001: Space Odyssey, movies I would have never watched beforehand. I've always been a reader, but not until my arrival in Massachusetts was I open about it, even leading to me reading books with other people. This brought up extremely interesting philosophical topics, like the justification of the death penalty, the definition of a criminal, and the influence of nature vs nurture, all of which spawned from our thoughts and discussions on what we were reading.

In Heretics of Dune by Frank Herbert it says, "Some people never observe anything. Life just happens to them. They get by on little more than a kind of dumb persistence..." I used to fit such a description, a person who doesn't care for much, not committed to any idea or function. Thankfully I've had friends and several family members push for me to be better, learn more, and grow. Due to these people I've picked up a knack to read as many classics as possible, to watch movies that revolutionized the industry, to appreciate playing on a field with a team, and to overall just to enjoy life. I can confidently say I wish I had done this sooner, to not have been as demotivated as I was in my earlier years. Yet I can reason it gives me an incentive to work harder in future endeavors and to continue my education further.