



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE AIR UNIVERSITY (AETC)



1 January 2017

Colonel Bobby C. Woods, Jr.
Director, HQ Air Force JROTC
60 West Maxwell Boulevard
Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6501

Dear AFJROTC Cadets,

As we start a fresh new year together, I ask each of you to consider the “power” of your service. This power includes positively impacting the lives of others. As AFJROTC cadets, the power of your service is **transformative for those you serve...but just as important, it transforms you as an individual!**

Across our nation and the globe, your service, selflessness, and leadership provides positive impacts in your school, community, and our nation. The 1.6+ million hours of community service you perform each year truly makes a difference! You have seen people who need help and things that need to be done, and you decided to do something about it. That is real power.

YOU are setting the example! First, by seeing what needs to be done (recognizing it), and second, by doing something positive (actions). When you decide to act, and decide to give of your time and talents, YOU make things better. You represent the Air Force and AFJROTC very well and all of us are very thankful for your example. Well done cadets!

Our Air Force second core value is “Service Before Self.” As the second of only three Air Force core values, have you ever wondered “why” it’s so important? Why is it so powerful?

1. **Service is action, not talk!** When we make the decision to act and do something positive, we take the first steps toward changing things for the better, steps toward making our nation and world better. Your action in serving others sets an example and that example... **is leadership.**
2. **Service is proof of unselfishness!** Selfishness or an unhealthy “inward focus” rather than having an “outward focus” on others is much too common in our world today. Unselfishness through service demonstrates that our “duty” takes precedence over our personal desires. It’s confirmation that we care enough about something to give our time and efforts to support it.
3. **Putting others before ourselves reveals the high character trait of true humility and creates an honorable example others will want to emulate!** It is through our “quiet doing” over and over again that others begin to respect, appreciate, admire, and follow us. Know that when we first decide... and then act, we touch lives that we may not even be aware of. When we take time to be kind and offer a smile or an encouraging word to someone and then back it up with positive action that proves our concern, we connect as people in a way that is very powerful. Service is powerful!
4. **Serving others is personally rewarding!** Knowing that we helped others and were part of something bigger than ourselves, gives us a sense of accomplishment that makes us feel pride to have contributed in a positive way. It feels good to help others. It also gets us out in our communities and helps build important relationships. It also proves social responsibility.

5. **Service transforms!** Service positively impacts others and transforms schools, communities, neighbors, friends, our nation, and our world and it also teaches and transforms us at the same time. It's through our service and connecting with others and the life lessons we learn from it that helps make us better and our nation stronger. This is the power of service.

It is impossible to be a true leader without serving others! Leadership and service are tied together. If you want respect... then humbly serve others. If you want to be a leader... then humbly serve others. Our most revered and respected historical leaders were men and women of humble character who put service before self and chose to serve others. They led by example! They were leaders and citizens who willingly sacrificed for the greater good. Always remember, no matter our background or family heritage, all of us are brothers and sisters as Americans!

Our core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do are the same values that instill confidence, earn lasting respect, and help make us a team. Our core values point to universal unchanging truths. When lived out day after day, our example is powerful and positively influences others. Leadership is in essence, influence! We all know that "rank" doesn't make us leaders. Rank and position never makes us a leader. So what makes a leader?

A regular practice of humility, genuine care for others, integrity, service, excellence, which is all welded together with personal high character...makes a leader! If you are this kind of a person, then you are a leader. It's much more than just knowing something to be true in your mind, only by "applying" what you know is true and consistently doing it (positive actions), is where our character is revealed and developed. Your 1.6+ million hours of service each year is proof that you are "do-ers!"

As AFJROTC cadets, **you are a team that is 120,000+ strong!** Your service certainly transforms other people and places, but it also teaches and transforms **YOU** as well. This is the transformative power of service and AFJROTC!

I hope each of you have a wonderful year. Remember, every day is a fresh beginning. Every day is a gift. Today is a new day. I hope you use this letter to start a conversation with each other and thoroughly discuss the "power" of service with your fellow cadets and students. I look forward to seeing all the incredible things you do all across our nation and overseas. Keep up the superb work, cadets. Well done!

Humbly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bobby Woods, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

BOBBY C. WOODS, JR., Colonel, USAF