Liberty Battalion
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I am pleased to share an update on the Liberty Battalion, the direction the program is taking, and how our community partners and alumni can continue to assist and shape our future.

We are quickly approaching the commissioning of our 2024 class. This relatively small class did exceptionally well to keep the Liberty Battalion moving in the right direction. Our Mission Set 24 consists of 17 Cadets, two of which were commissioned in Fall 2023. 12 Cadets will commission on May 18th, while the remaining three will commission later in the summer. I am incredibly proud of the organizational leadership these senior Cadets have exhibited over the past year in improving the program and developing those Cadets coming behind them. We closed the Spring 2024 semester with several key events, including the combined Field Training Exercise (CFTX) with BU, MIT, Providence College, and URI. Each MS4 leads with grace and honor while upholding the Army slogan of *Be All You Can Be*.

We are fortunate to have a strong group of dedicated military Cadre that continue developing talented Cadets into leaders of character. Our center of gravity for the Liberty Battalion is the Cadre. Without them, nothing is possible. Thank you, LTC Grady Stebbins, MAJ Sean Fitzgerald, MAJ James Compagnone, SFC Andrew Wilson, and Mr. Dave Letellier. This year, we bid farewell to SFC Mario Garza, who departed in January and now works as the Inspector General for the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Moore. This spring, we welcomed SFC Bradon Roberts, who joined the team from the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM). Our stable core of civilians is the glue that keeps our program on track. Mr. Scott Lyons continues to lead the enrollment, recruitment, and scholarship efforts. Mr. Bob Dallaire ensures that Cadets are outfitted with all the right gear, while Mrs. Sheila Hutchins takes care of each Cadet’s actions passionately. She is the epitome of taking care of Soldiers. This year, we welcomed Mrs. Anne Barnes and Mrs. Denise Hopkins to the team. We look forward to their contributions.

The Cadre and Cadets of Liberty Battalion continue to be good partners in the community and on campus and facilitate opportunities for alumni engagement. Liberty BN Cadets and Cadre are making it happen by supporting local sports teams with color guard, Veteran’s Day events, and local parades. This semester, we had the pleasure of hosting several senior leaders currently serving alumni as part of the MS400 curriculum. This received positive feedback from our seniors. We hosted Major General (Retired) Sal Cambria on 22 March at our annual military ball and inducted him into the Cadet Command Hall of Fame. This was the first HoF honor for any Northeastern Army ROTC alumni. Feel free to contact us if there are alumni out in the field or locally in Boston who wish to connect with the program. We hosted alumni several times as part of our leader development program. It can be as simple as a Zoom or MS TEAMS session with a Military Science class or a visit to the program.

I wish everyone a safe and successful summer and look forward to seeing you on the high ground.

Leading with Grace and Honor,
COL Brian Slotnick
I never thought that I would serve for more than 3 years in the Army, but 21 years later, here I am, getting ready to retire and start a new chapter in my life.

I initially joined to be part of the All-Army Wrestling team. I tried out and was selected to join the team. Shortly after receiving my orders for Colorado, my orders were amended because my current unit was deploying. I must admit I was salty not being able to go to Colorado and wrestle, but at the end of the day I knew my job and what I signed up for.

I have several deployments under my belt, ranging from 15 months to 9 months long. As difficult and challenging as some of these deployments were, what got me through them was the people I worked with. Although we didn’t always agree on everything and see eye to eye, we knew we had each other's backs at the end of the day. My last deployment was about 6 years ago; shortly after redeploying, I was selected as the Senior Military Science Instructor at Northeastern University ROTC program.

Working at Northeastern as the SMSI has been the most fulfilling job I have had in the Army. At first, I found this job a bit intimidating. I didn’t know much about ROTC and my role as the SMSI. After my first semester in the program, I noticed the impact we had on the Cadets. For many of them, this is their first introduction to the Army, and most of them are eager to learn and grow before commissioning as an Officer in the Army. I quickly realized that the best way I could help the program and the Cadets was by getting to know each Cadet better, not just as a student but personally as well. I began to care for them even more than I expected and wanted to help them do well in the program and their career that followed.

Although I have worked with many people in the past 20 years in the Army, the relationships I built with the Cadets is unmatched. I was fortunate to see five cohorts commission into Officers, and best of all, I was able to see them grow and develop their leadership style as they built their confidence and became mentors to the newer Cadets. Seeing their success and achievements as they grew in the program has been extremely gratifying. I became a fan of their accomplishments and supported them the best I could as they started their careers in the military.

There are many things that I will miss from the Army after I retire: the people I was fortunate to work with and build friendships with, the life experiences (good and bad) that I will never forget, and most of all, seeing people grow as they built their confidence and develop into great leaders themselves. NU’s ROTC program is where I was able to witness young adults transform into leaders, and it's an awesome feeling to know that I was a part of something like this.

As I mentioned before, this has been the best assignment I have had in my 20+ years in the Army. I am grateful to have been a part of it. To all the Cadets in the program, thank you for letting me get to know each of you. I wish all of you the best, and I will keep rooting for your success.

Grace and Honor
MSG Jesus Salas
This past summer I had the opportunity to attend Basic Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. At the time, I was a rising third-year interested in joining Liberty Battalion as an MSIII. I was sent to Basic Camp to learn what other juniors learned in their first and second years in the program. I was really excited to go to camp but also nervous because I had no prior knowledge about anything Army.

The day the buses dropped us off from the airport we were assigned our Company and Platoon. I was in Bravo Company 1st PLT, the best company and the best PLT. The next few days we spent settling into the barracks, were issued equipment, and were first introduced to our Drill Sergeants (DS). We were taught how to march, how to conduct PT (physical training), to appreciate the DFAC (dining facilities) and the true meaning of accountability of your weapon and battle buddies.

After the adjustment period and learning the basics, we started to do more events with our platoons around the base. I took my first ACFT (Army fitness test) while the sun rose. Senior DS taught us weapons safety and how to disassemble and clean an M4 under the awning outside our barracks. I learned how to pack a ruck sack, do face paint, the difference between a low and high crawl, and set up a patrol base in the field. The last week we learned the basics of plotting points for land navigation, how to read and use a compass, and started conducting training lanes to practice battle drills.

Camp was a huge learning experience for me. Not just in the sense of learning Army doctrine and standards, but also learning how to be a leader and teammate. No one in my platoon knew each other before we showed up to the very first formation. Our platoon was made up of kids with big personalities from schools all over the country. We were thrown into situations where we only had each other to depend on which forced us to trust and support each other. This created a strong sense of comradery and pride. A success for our leadership was a success for all of us. We were disciplined and worked hard and had many accomplishments to show for it. The friendships I made at camp were some of the strongest I have ever made; I keep in touch with them and can’t wait to see all their successes.

My favorite memory from camp was the obstacle course day. Alpha and Bravo Company shared a course, and all the squads did a run-through. After that, the NCO’s picked an Alpha and Bravo team of twelve Cadets to race each other for the “Excellence in Physical Fitness” ribbon to add to our guidon. Our LT, LT Correa, even ran it with us. The energy was high as Alpha Company NCO’s dumped jerry cans of water and ice in our mud pit and the favor was returned. Bravo won by a landslide. Half of the Bravo Company team was represented by my platoon, something we were all proud of. DS Adkins said he would even smile for the picture, to no one’s surprise he didn’t but LT Sprick smiled for the both of them.

My time at camp was great because of the support of my friends, NCO’s, and Officers. Sergeant Mills told me a dad joke every day and showed me how to see the potential in myself. Sergeant Shives gave me the confidence I have today as a leader. DS Adkins ingrained it into me to never go anywhere without a water source, my trusty Nalgene. Overall, this experience was enjoyable while also preparing me to be an MSIII at Liberty Battalion.
This past summer I had the privilege of attending Air Assault School at West Point, NY. The U.S. Military Academy hosted an instructor team from Fort Campbell’s Sabalauski Air Assault School to conduct Air Assault classes for Soldiers and Cadets. It is an 11-day course where students learn and become proficient in air assault, sling load, and rappelling operations.

Air Assault School begins with Day 0. This day is considered the most physically exhausting and passing every requirement would earn you your spot in the course. Every student’s physical capabilities were tested during the timed 2 Mile Run in ACUs, a long smoke session, and the obstacle course. The obstacle consisted of seven minor obstacles, in which you had to successfully complete six, and two major obstacles that you had to pass. The two major obstacles, the “Tough One” and the “Confidence Climb” involved grit and strength as you would climb up on the obstacle high above the ground. Throughout the day, students would be physically exhausted through intermittent smoke sessions that always came before, after, and even during the Day 0 tests. Even after completing all these physical tests, running the 2 mile run, passing every obstacle, the day was not over. What would be the first of many was a gear inspection, or layout. Students were given a packing list, and if any single item was forgotten in your ruck, you would be dropped from the course. Day 0 causes the most drops in Air Assault School, but after this point in the day, you have passed and earned your spot to officially begin the course.

Phase I of Air Assault School began early in the morning with classroom instruction that was focused on combat assault, air assault operations, pathfinder operations, MEDEVAC operations, and hand & arm signals. Students would meticulously study information about various rotary wing aircraft, such as the UH-60 Blackhawk or CH-47 Chinook. In order to get through the phase, you had to be able to get through all the random smoke sessions, pass a written test, and a practical hand & arm signals test.

Phase II is considered the most difficult phase of Air Assault School. The first day began with a very early morning wake up to start a 6 mile ruck march that had to be completed in under 90 minutes. This event alone caused some students to be dropped, but completion of the ruck march led into another layout inspection. After this was done, the next block of classroom instruction would begin shortly after. Students immediately started learning about sling load operations, what sling loads every aircraft could handle, and how to actually set up a sling load. Classroom material involved a ton of numbers to memorize per aircraft, and required intense studying to remember it all. The phase concluded with a written test and the infamous sling load inspection test. Students had to correctly point out at least three out of four deficiencies in four different sling loads within 2 minutes paying attention to close detail.

Phase III began early in the morning with a formation 4 mile run that was completed in 36 minutes while all students were forced to yell cadences. After this run, students would begin ground training for rappelling operations. Air Assault Cadre would carefully go through how to tie a hip rappel seat, how to properly hook up to the rappelling ropes, and other safety measures to ensure we would all safely rappel. The last day of Phase III included two practical tests where you had to tie a proper Hip Rappel Seat in under 90 seconds and hook up to the rappelling ropes in under 15 seconds, both without any deficiencies. Passing these two tests would earn you the opportunity to finally rappel out of a UH-60 Blackhawk. When it was finally my turn, I descended from the aircraft and had a beautiful view of the Hudson River on my way down. It was the most rewarding experience so far, and I knew that the end of the school was near.

What was left to do was to rest and fuel for the grueling 12 mile ruck march through the highly elevated roads of West Point. This ruck march also caused some drops, but the end of it was followed by the last layout inspection. Nerves were high as we were all minutes from passing the last test in the school, and as we finished the inspection, we all cheered as we just completed Air Assault School. I finished Air Assault School as the Distinguished Honor Graduate, class 709-23. The chief instructor, SFC Patterson, pinned my wings on me, and I immediately was filled with joy and relief as I had finally achieved something I worked so hard for. Air Assault School was an extremely worthwhile experience and is something I recommend to all.
The Basic Airborne Course, aka “Airborne School,” takes place in the sunny and inviting city of Columbus, Georgia. Previously named Fort Benning, Fort Moore is the home of this three-week training program that culminates in earning a pair of shiny new jump wings. Attending last summer from June to July, this experience provided me with an interesting perspective of the “real Army” and its specialized skill training.

Airborne school can be conceptually split into three phases: Ground Week, Tower Week, and Jump Week. While the last phase is pretty self-explanatory, the first two phases blend together into a physical and mental preparation for the first big leap of Jump Week.

Like many Cadets, my experience began with the Yellow Cab Company taking me from the Columbus airport to the Airborne barracks—where I assimilated into the lower enlisted ranks of 2nd Stick, 1st Platoon, Charlie Company. Living in these barracks and interacting with enlisted Soldiers from all walks of life was a major unexpected highlight from my time there. Listening to stories from people straight out of high school / OSUT as well as NCO Air Force TACPs gave me a much better understanding of what the military looked like outside of the enclave of Liberty Battalion ROTC.

Ground Week began soon after the initial settling in, and consisted of a lot of Parachute Landing Falls (PLFs) and some jumps out of the 34 foot mock towers. The 34 foot towers were a bit more nerve-wracking than expected, but began the initial desensitization of jumping into a free fall and trusting the Army equipment. This week focused on how to leave the aircraft and how to hit the ground.

Tower Week consisted of more training geared towards the in-air part of the jump process, working on exiting the aircraft and pulling slips to guide the parachute. This week also contained activities such as the infamous Swing Landing Trainer, which provided a realistic feeling of a PLF as well as a nice headache to pair.

Finally, the week of reckoning arrived. Jump Week. There really is nothing like jumping out of a plane moving at 150 knots with a warm propeller blast spinning you through the air. I will remember the absolute terror and excitement of my first jump for the rest of my life. Bridle lines tangled, dropping faster than my entire chalk, spinning around until my parachute finally opened fully. In total, my class did 5 jumps: 3 Hollywood Day (no equipment), 1 Hollywood Night, and 1 Combat Equipment. These jumps, while fun, are an extreme way of teaching you not only to overcome fear, but also to trust fellow classmates and the equipment that you use.

I think this is something that should be emphasized more for this type of training—yes, it gives you a skill identifier to wear on your uniform. Yes, it feels cool to look at the world from 1250 feet in the air. However, it also provides a very unique experience to build confidence from and understand that taking big leaps involve support from those around you. My Airborne experience would not have been as impactful and successful without the support of my Cadet friends from other schools, the instruction of Black Hats, the patience of the jumpers in my chalk, and the attention to detail of the parachute Riggers who packed my chute. It is this collective experience that made this special as an ROTC Cadet, and one I hope the next classes will feel as well. AATW.
Two Falls ago on a Romanian military base with intermittent SATCOM connectivity to the outside world, I completed an application and was selected for the Green to Gold Active Duty Option program. This program allows enlisted Soldiers to return to school for two years to earn their first bachelor’s or first master’s degree and commission through ROTC at a school of their choosing, all while continuing to receive their active duty pay and benefits. The program also allows usage of the Montgomery or Post 9/11 GI Bill with the Yellow Ribbon program, earned through active duty service, to pay for college in lieu of a scholarship. Upon my selection, I chose to get my Masters in Cybersecurity at Boston College due to the quality of the education and proximity to my hometown of Albany, NY.

While I chose Boston College for my education, the superb ROTC program at BC has prepared me well for the leadership challenges I will face as an Officer. Both our Cadre and MSIVs are great at transitioning me from the direct leadership I was accustomed to as a Junior NCO to an organizational leadership approach better suited for larger elements. Using my prior service to inform, but not define my leadership style was my chief concern coming into ROTC, and Liberty Battalion addressed that concern and grew me as a leader in ways I could not previously imagine.

At my last unit, our BN AS2 (A Green to Gold Active Duty Option Officer) told me “Green to Gold is one of the Army’s best kept secrets”. Only now do I understand why. Few Army programs for NCOs allow you to pick your duty station, maintain a predictable day-to-day schedule, develop you as both a leader and person, with a simple packet to complete. I will be forever grateful for the experience I’ve had as a Green to Gold Active Duty Option Cadet and would love for others to get the same experience in Liberty Battalion. Dedicated to Grace and Honesty!
Every year Liberty Battalion sends a group of twelve Cadets to the Freedom Brigade Ranger Challenge competition in October. Here, over 40 teams compete for a spot to progress to the international Sandhurst Competition. This year, captains CDT Louis Mills and CDT Alex Sharpe led a strong team up to and through the competition. The event is three days long. Each event requires nine of the twelve to participate.

Teams arrive on Friday and immediately enter the first event: The Burden. Participating Cadets run two miles, then work together to bring heavy items, including a litter with a dummy, water cans, and a tire across the field and back several times for speed. Early the next morning teams begin Land Navigation far before the sun has risen to find the most points in the given time while staying together as a team. Next up is the five-event round robin, consisting of Trauma Combat Casualty Care, One Rope Bridge, Grenade Course, Weapons Competency, and Obstacle Course. The TCCC lane consists of evaluating a casualty and carrying it by litter to a location away from fire for accuracy and speed. In One Rope Bridge teams make a bridge between two trees with a rope and transport themselves across it for speed. An added challenge to this lane is a strict no-cursing rule. The Grenade Course consists of a few physical challenges before high crawling to several barricades and throwing grenades for speed and accuracy, followed by an oral grenade knowledge check. In Weapons Competency, Cadets assemble M4s, M249s, and an M17, and perform function checks for accuracy and speed, while one Cadet takes a written weapons exam. Lastly, there’s the obstacle course, where one of the hardest challenges aside from the obstacles themselves, is ensuring every Cadet on every obstacle has the proper amount of safeties. Lack of this could cause a 5-minute penalty, hence teams' times ranged from seven minutes to over an hour.

On Saturday night is a large moral-boosting tug-of-war between all teams. After an intense night of cheering Cadets return to their sleep systems mud-covered and ready to rest. In the morning they finish out the competition with a six-mile ruck.

This year, Liberty Battalion greatly improved its ranking in the competition. The team is keeping their eye on the gold as they continue to train hard during the spring semester. We have big hopes for the upcoming season.
True Grit, Tough Ruck

On Sunday, April 14th, 36 Liberty Battalion Cadets participated in the 14th annual Tough Ruck. Founded in 2010, the Tough Ruck is a marathon long ruck march through the historic battlegrounds of Lexington and Concord Massachusetts, in honor of fallen Soldiers and first responders. The Tough Ruck is the official ruck march of the Boston Marathon, and finishers earn a Boston Marathon Medal! Participants raise money for the Military Friends Foundation, which provides critical financial aid and support for the families of our American Heroes. This year was the Liberty Battalion Team’s most successful year yet, raising a total of $37,890! It was a pleasure to lead our team in practices and on race day as the most successful ROTC program to participate, in both fundraising and race results.

As a Cadet and future Officer in the U.S. Army, I deeply appreciated the opportunity to lead a team and accomplish this incredible feat together. During training sessions, I bonded with my fellow Cadets by encouraging them to overcome their fatiguing legs or look forward to upcoming mile markers. On race day, I felt a wonderful sense of pride for our country and the other “tough ruckers.” Marching, jogging, and shuffling with people from many different backgrounds inspired me to push myself to my physical limits and feel grateful to soon join the brave men and women who serve our country. The Tough Ruck experience has been one of my favorite memories as a Cadet. The countless weekend practice rucks taught me to remain disciplined months in advance in order to be well prepared for the race. I’ve learned to embrace physical challenges from the overwhelming satisfaction I felt crossing the finish line and accomplishing an important goal I’d set for myself so many months ago. I also learned how helpful working as a team was during the race. Having the support of other Cadets and friends who participated kept my feet moving during the hardest miles.

The most challenging of those 26.2 miles was towards the end, between miles 20 and 25. I needed to overcome the pain I felt throughout my body and maintain my long strides in order to finish as soon as possible without losing my rhythm. I sought motivation through many methods, including music, snacks, conversation, and even intermittent sprinting. However, I found that the best mode of encouragement came from reflection on the reason for my ruck. There have been countless Soldiers who, in fighting for our country, entered battlefields knowing the dangers they would face and the risks they were taking to defend our freedom. The Tough Ruck supports the Soldiers that have made the ultimate sacrifice to afford me a wonderful and comfortable life in the United States. I told myself that if they can overcome their fears and physical pain, and even give their life for our country, I needed to finish the marathon in solidarity with their sacrifice. This was all the motivation I needed, in my most difficult miles, to beat the Tough Ruck and carry on in the years to come as a hardworking, dedicated, and inspired serviceman for our country!

In closing, captaining our incredible Tough Ruck team was an honor and achievement I will never forget. I am extremely proud of every Cadet and the Cadre who shared in this wonderful feat and helped raise an incredible amount for the Military Friends Foundation (the second most of any Tough Ruck team)! I learned a great deal about my own physical abilities that I will carry into my career in the military. I look forward to passing the torch to next year’s Tough Ruck captain and continuing our tradition. I will also be forever grateful for the Liberty Battalion entrusting me with such a fruitful and remarkable responsibility.
My name is Katherine Giglio, and I am a 5th year Nursing major at Northeastern University and plan to commission into the Army Nurse Corps in May 2024. I currently serve as the c/ Battalion Commander for the Spring 2024 semester but have previously held the role of Able Company 1SG in the Fall of 2023. While at Northeastern, I have completed two co-op experiences in Boston-based hospitals. I was able to work alongside some of the nation’s best nurses, doctors, and healthcare personnel in critical care medicine—ranging from a Burn and Trauma Intensive Care Unit to a Level 1 Trauma Center Emergency Department. I am currently a part of my university’s Student Nurses Association, which works to develop and execute campus and community outreach programs in the Boston area. Additionally, I am an active member in the Lambda Nu chapter of Alpha Chi Omega sorority, whose philanthropy focuses on the awareness and prevention of domestic violence.

After attending CST in Fort Knox last summer, I traveled to West Point, NY and completed the Nurse Summer Training Program (NSTP) at Keller Army Community Hospital (KACH). KACH services Cadets and Cadre from the United States Military Academy as well as the Garrison community of West Point, which totals around 6,000 individuals. The 28-bed medical treatment facility operates 24/7 as an emergency department, outpatient surgery center, inpatient medical-surgical unit, and outpatient primary care center. While at KACH, I completed 120 clinical hours and rotated through each area of the hospital, including responding to 911 calls with the emergency crew. I was able to refine my clinical skills in various areas of the hospital, and even spent a few days shadowing CRNAs (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist) in the OR during surgeries.

I helped prepare patients for surgery, induce sedation and paralysis, manage airways and hemodynamic stability, and then monitor patients as they woke up from procedures. Outside of the operating room, I was able to participate in what is known as the “Pediatric Rodeo”, where those attending school on post would come in for their annual pre-school wellness visits. This entailed obtaining height and weight measurements, performing eye exams, and administering necessary vaccines to children and adolescents ages 3-17. My peers and I were able to set up and execute the clinic under the supervision of the civilian nurses who worked in the outpatient primary care area of the hospital.

Back home in Boston, I continue to work per diem as a nursing assistant in the ED of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). I am able to take care of patients from across the state, nation, and globe in an acute care setting, where I can combine by passion for critical care and emergency medicine in a fast-paced environment. Being a Level I trauma center, the ED at MGH sees a wide variety of patients—everything from motor vehicle accidents, violent crimes, falls, cardiac arrests, strokes, and even psychiatric emergencies can come through the doors at any moment. Working in a high volume and high stress area of the hospital has allowed me to showcase my leadership skills and manage my own stress in chaotic situations. I feel much more prepared to enter the profession of arms as a registered nurse (RN) with that level of experience as a nursing assistant.

After taking and passing the NCLEX-RN exam, I will attend AMEDD BOLC at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio TX, and following the completion of that I will travel to my first duty station for the Clinical Nurse Transition Program (CNTP). I hope to re-specialize after one year of medical-surgical nursing (66H) to either emergency nursing (66T) or intensive care nursing (66S). Later in my career, I hope to attend CRNA school through the Army at and obtain my Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNAP) as a CRNA (66F). Becoming a CRNA would allow me to transition between critical care specialties while in the Army, and set me up for a successful civilian career once I choose to retire. One day, I hope to work in the private sector in a plastic surgery practice, providing anesthesia during reconstructive surgeries for those who have experienced traumatic injuries, specifically life-threatening burns.
I am CDT Maya Berndt, a freshman majoring in Political Science with a concentration in Security Studies and a minor in Religious Studies. Along with being an ROTC Cadet, I simultaneously was recruited to play Division 1 soccer at Northeastern University. Balancing academics, a D1 sport, and ROTC is challenging and takes a lot of time management and dedication.

My typical week is busy and filled with long days, however I have learned that I work best in these types of conditions. My morning starts around 5:00 am, in preparation for an ROTC PT session, LLAB, or another similar event. I am a morning person and have learned to love waking up and starting my day before the sun rises. After this, I have class, which typically lasts from 8:00 AM to about 2:00 PM, depending on the day. My schedule changes when we are in soccer season, which is in the fall versus out of season, which is the spring. During the fall, my practices are from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM and they consist of an hour of lifting and two hours of field training. Additionally, our games are typically on Thursdays and Sundays. Whereas, in the spring, my practice is much later, from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM, which can make it extremely difficult to get an adequate amount of sleep.

As I went through my first year balancing my schedule, I have learned to take naps when I can and never take downtime for granted. In between ROTC, classes, and soccer, I find time to eat and do homework. On the weekends, aside from gamedays, I try and find time to myself, which I found is vital in maintaining such an intense schedule. I make an effort to sleep in, go to church on Sundays, go for walks, and do yoga/meditation. These may seem like small activities, but they help me rest and relax my mind in between weeks. Additionally, I find time on the weekends to hang out with my friends, although being surrounded by my best friends every day, whether they are on my soccer team or in ROTC, makes these activities much more enjoyable.

Balancing all these things has taught me so much about myself and my dedication. I have learned that it takes a detailed amount of planning and scheduling to get through the week, which is why my agenda is my best friend. It also takes a lot of focus and determination because being pushed is uncomfortable sometimes, but we often learn best and improve the most in uncomfortable situations. Most importantly, I learned that I love what I do, which is the biggest part of why I can do it all. I enjoy waking up every day and being pushed to the best of my ability.

The best advice I can give to any future athletes who want to join ROTC is to not be afraid of the commitment, but be aware of what comes with it. Time management is the most important quality I have developed throughout this process so far. Additionally, find joy in everything you do, even if it makes you uncomfortable. I have learned that looking at my day-to-day battles as opportunities to improve, rather than obligations to attend, has made it so much more enjoyable and beneficial to myself and my growth in all these areas. Lastly, be present in everything you do because you have 4 years to learn, grow, have fun, and make an impact on the people you do it with.
When I was in 8th grade, I began competing in sprint distance triathlons. After my first race, I fell in love with the triathlon training process and racing. My ultimate goal that I created in 8th grade was to complete an Ironman triathlon, specifically the Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii. As I went through high school, I continued competing in sprint triathlons, and I was on the varsity cross country and swim and dive teams. When I came to Northeastern, I joined the club triathlon team and started competing in olympic distance triathlon races. The fall of my junior year at Northeastern, I was having a challenging time with a lot of things in my personal life. As a result, I decided to sign up for Ironman Lake Placid (2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike, and 26.2 mile run) to see how far I could push both my body and my mind.

Ironman Lake Placid takes place in July, so I had to balance triathlon training along with ROTC and my school work until the summer months. In a typical week, I will have ROTC training 4-5 days a week from 0600-0730. In regards to triathlon training, I swim twice a week, bike three times a week, run three times a week, and strength train twice a week. I try to get my triathlon training done immediately after ROTC training in the morning so that I can focus on classes and studying the rest of the day. I have to focus a lot on hydration, nutrition, and recovery to ensure I am able to perform my best every day whether that be physically or academically.

Going into Lake Placid, I was not sure what to expect. The 2.4 mile swim was tough, but I felt strong stepping out of the water heading towards my bike. The 112 mile bike was a gorgeous course through the hilly Adirondack mountains where the weather varied from clear and sunny to torrential downpour. The 26.2 mile run started off well with high adrenaline. The second half of the run, my legs turned into lead, and I had to alternate between walking and running.

When I saw my family at mile 24, I paused my run and burst out in tears from overwhelming emotion. Coming around towards the finish line on the Lake Placid Olympic Oval and hearing the four words I trained months to hear, “You are an Ironman”, was unreal. I finished the race in just over 12 hours, came 3rd in my age group and qualified for the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii, in October 2023.

Kona was everything I could have dreamed of and more. Before the race, my mom, older sister, and I traveled throughout Hawaii seeing the volcanic national parks, coffee farms, luau’s, waterfall hikes, swimming with manta rays, snorkeling, and watching the sunset and stargazing on top of a volcano above the clouds. The Kona race course itself was iconic, especially racing alongside the professional triathletes. The 2.4 mile swim course was tough to navigate through currents, but was gorgeous above the fish and dolphins. The 112 mile bike course is through lava fields, headwinds, and up the side of a volcano. The 26.2 mile run course is exposed to high humidity and temperatures along Kona’s hilly coastline. Finishing the race on Ali’i drive in just under 12 hours was the highest point of my triathlon career. Ever since Kona, I have continued to train and chase the “high” of triathlon racing. My most recent race was Ironman 70.3 Puerto Rico where I placed 1st in my age group and qualified for the 2024 Ironman 70.3 World Championships in Taupo, New Zealand in December.

Ironman training has tested my dedication and discipline daily and has given me an opportunity to see the world while doing a sport I love. I have gained more confidence to handle anything and have strengthened my mentality. During an Ironman, your body and mind are pushed to limits that you didn't even know existed. You learn to continue moving and take it one step at a time. This applies to life and ROTC as well. There are going to be hard times, but it is essential to go all in and continue pushing yourself forward every single day. I could not have learned these lessons or gained these experiences without the support of my family and my coach. When I cross the finish line of an Ironman, it is never “I did it”. It is always “we did it”. I could not have gotten to the finish line without knowing the support that was behind me and pushing me the whole way. Whenever you are challenged with something in life, just remember the Ironman motto, “Anything is possible”.

CDT McCann on the Kona Ironman run course

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CDT McCann on the Kona Ironman run course
William Appolon
Framingham State University
Bachelor's in Business and Information Technology
National Guard: Transportation

Favorite quote: “It is advisable to refrain from engaging in activities that may result in one appearing comical or amusing.”

Favorite memory: FTX

Aria Badra
Simmons University
Bachelor's in Nursing and Psychology
Active Duty: Nurse Corps

Favorite quote: "When you see someone putting on his Big Boots, you can be pretty sure that an adventure is going to happen." - Winnie the Pooh

Favorite memory: Being part of the reserve squad during a CST defense lane that was on the side of a hill and in the pouring rain. Everyone had super high morale and we all came out of the lane covered in mud and laughing about all the ridiculous things that happened during the lane. This was the first lane where my camp PLT really came together and from there the rest of the time flew by as we all embraced the suck.

Danielle Cresci
Boston College
Bachelor's in Nursing
Active Duty: Nurse Corps

Favorite quote: “True leaders must learn from their failures, use the lessons to motivate themselves, and not be afraid to try again or make the next tough decision”- Admiral William H. McRaven

Favorite memory: My favorite memory in ROTC was meeting some of my lifelong best friends and going through the program with my older sister.

Katherine Giglio
Northeastern University
Bachelor's in Nursing
Active Duty: Nurse Corps

Favorite quote: “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” -Teddy Roosevelt

Favorite memory: “Toe to Toe with Kenny Vo on the Fall FTX.”
Louise Groton
Northeastern University
Bachelor's in Bioengineering and Biochemistry
National Guard: Adjutant General

Favorite quote: "I am who I am today because of the choices I made yesterday" - Eleanor Roosevelt
Favorite memory: Leaving first FTX as an MSI not being able to wear my boots because my feet hurt so bad I physically could not put them back on.

Sunny Kang
Northeastern University
Bachelor's in Data Science and Biology
National Guard: Medical Services

Favorite quote: “There’s a difference between enjoying your youth and destroying your future”
Favorite memory: That’s hard….it’s between yelling “Cunningham!” every morning at the break of dawn and dressing up as the Scooby Gang for Halloween PT our first semester.

Shakirah Ketant
Emmanuel College
Bachelor's in Psychology
National Guard: Ordnance

Favorite quote: At the end of the day, the day gotta end
Favorite memory: MSII spring semester, eating pizza at CFTX

Sion Moon
Boston College
Bachelor's in Economics with a Minor in Finance
Army Reserve: Transportation

Favorite quote: "Those who live in fear of failure, or hardship, or embarrassment will never reach their potential"
Favorite memory: Fall CFTX ’22
Anna Munoz
*Boston College*
Bachelor's in Accounting
Active Duty: Military Intelligence detail Armor

*Favorite quote:* “Try and fail, but never fail to try”
*Favorite memory:* Attending the West Point Negotiation Conference

Marita Nothacker
*Simmons University*
Bachelor's in Nursing
Active Duty: Nurse Corps

*Favorite quote:* “Hungry dogs run faster” - Jason Kelce
*Favorite memory:* Training with Cadets from other Battalions during the CFTX at Camp Edwards my MSIII year

Sabrina Quadir
*Suffolk University*
Bachelor's in Computer Science
Reserves: Ordinance

*Favorite quote:* "We Need To Make The Most Of The Time We Have — To Live Our Lives The Way We Wanna Live. Every Minute... Every Moment, matters." ~ Aerith Gainsborough
*Favorite memory:* Going on the MSIV staff ride back in October 2023 to Gettysburg. The traveling, food, being away from academics for a few moments, and especially being with the friends you’ve trained with for years was a memorable experience.
After graduating Northeastern University and commissioning into the Army Reserves in May, I was able to land a dream job. I rejoined the team I co-oped at working for Yellow Shoes Creative Group, the internal creative agency for Disney Experiences, as a Production Coordinator. Some recent projects you may have seen include the top 24 of *American Idol* at Disney’s Aulani Resort & Spa in Hawaii and the *Disney Parks Magical Christmas Day Parade*.

If you would have asked me in high school if I would join ROTC, I would have said “What’s that?” All I knew in high school was that I wanted to go to a good college so that I could get a good job. My life goal was to work for The Walt Disney Company. I had no military family, no military experience, and honestly no desire to join the military - mostly because I didn’t think it was a path I could take to achieve my goals. After all, I was a creative person and wanted to pursue a creative professional path… how would the military get me there?

A big reason I chose Northeastern was because I knew I may have the opportunity to co-op at some great companies during my time in college instead of after graduation. I was so glad that Liberty Battalion was set up for co-op and that it was the norm amongst Cadets. I never felt like I was behind or missing out when I left for co-op and when I returned, I was able to pick up right where I left off. My co-op with The Walt Disney Company ultimately led to me landing a full time role on the same team!

I was torn when choosing my component between Active Duty and Reserves because I loved both my civilian career path and my time in ROTC so strongly. Luckily, the Reserves allows you to balance the two quite nicely. I was nervous that splitting my time and energy between both would hold me back from giving my all in either, but luckily, ROTC sets you up to do just that.

Having entered the professional civilian workforce, I apply my ROTC leadership training and now Army Reserves experience daily. It’s been second nature for me to take initiative and make decisions even in an entry level role. I’m lucky to work for a company that takes pride in hiring military members and that fully understands the scope of service. It’s been seamless to go to my drill weekends and I’ve enjoyed educating my coworkers about what it means to be in the Army Reserves. Everyone has been extremely supportive.

Every drill weekend looks a little different in terms of length and activities but overall as an Officer, I’m planning and leading consistently. It’s typically a busy weekend with a lot of boxes to check but it keeps the days moving quickly. It’s neat to be surrounded by people that come from so many different civilian careers and ranging walks of life - there’s always something to talk about!

Looking back now as an Army Reserves Officer and Production Coordinator for The Walt Disney Company, I cannot imagine how my life would have shaken out if I hadn’t joined ROTC. During my time as a Cadet in Liberty Battalion, I had the happiest mornings at training, I had such an incredible support system of Cadre, and I made lifelong friends. The balance of a part time Army career on top of a full time civilian career is definitely a commitment but if I could go back, I wouldn’t change my choice. Being in the Army Reserves grants me the opportunity to further my civilian and Army careers simultaneously. I think the Army Reserves is a great option for Cadets that want to hit the ground running in both!
Since graduating and commissioning out of Liberty Battalion three years ago, I have been in the Educational Delay (Ed Delay) program attending Boston College Law School with the hopes of becoming an Army Judge Advocate. Now in my third and final year, I have been officially accepted to the Army JAG Corps. After passing the Massachusetts Bar exam this summer, I will start military service as an Army lawyer. The Ed Delay program afforded me the opportunity to combine service with preparing myself for a career in law.

The Ed Delay program allows ROTC Cadets to attend graduate school so that these Officers may later serve as active duty Judge Advocates (Lawyers) or health care professionals. Being on the JAG side I cannot speak on the healthcare route as effectively, but both are important pipelines for the Army to supplement its lawyers and healthcare Officers with people familiar with what the Army is like. While participation in Ed Delay does not guarantee that an Officer will later be selected for the JAG Corps, ROTC experience is viewed favorably by the selection board for that reason.

I was first exposed to the Ed Delay program as a Cadet at Boston College. I had wanted to become a lawyer from a young age because, at its best, the law has the power to help others. That goal also pushed me to ROTC, and I was fortunate to find out that not only does a path to do both exist, but that Liberty Battalion has an amazing track record of placing Cadets successfully into the Ed Delay program. I don’t have hard statistics in relation to other programs around the country, but I know from both my time as a Cadet and being in the area still that the program has placed five Cadets out of Boston College successfully on that track over the last seven years. Considering my year’s class for the Ed Delay law track is around twenty Cadets total, I would suggest that is a good number relative to the size of our program.

After graduation, I returned to the Boston College for law school. For a number of reasons it just made sense as a fit: I wanted to practice in New England later in life; I wanted to stay close to family and friends; and I was fortunate to receive a scholarship that made it make sense. That being said, anyone who goes to Boston College knows how incredible the community is. I don’t know whether that community was learned by BC from Liberty Battalion (or vice versa), but my decision to return was in large part based on returning to that welcoming community to continue my professional development.

While in Law School I have been involved in a number of programs and internships on top of classes.
Northeastern University
Boston College
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Berklee College of Music
Emmanuel College
Framingham State University
Simmons University
Suffolk University
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

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