



Junior Leadership

Class of 2018

Yohann Offredo (Westport, Connecticut) was chosen to represent Camden Military Academy and deliver a speech (below). Later in the evening, he was named the Robert J. Sheheen Outstanding Leadership Student of the Year.

The Importance of Student Leadership by Yohann Offredo

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, my name is Yohann Offredo, and I am thrilled to speak about today's topic "The Importance of Student Leadership". We observe leadership practiced daily and throughout our lives, whether by our parents, friends, or celebrities, and we know strong leadership is a crucial and powerful force. Leaders lead the way for others to follow, and I have followed the way that Mr. Garrison and Ms. Parks set for us graduates at Camden Military Academy.

Junior Leadership has given me the inspiration that has shaped my character and given me skills to grow as a leader myself. In one of the first sessions I learned that I am an extrovert, and with this knowledge, I have thought about my leadership style. I have discovered that most people talk about leadership in the context of a workplace but tend to overlook how leadership is carried out among students in a school setting. I believe that student leaders have the most influence on teens because they are the same age and, as students themselves, can relate most closely.

As a cadet at Camden Military Academy, I have had a different high school experience than most people. I wake up at 6am to clean and do military drills until classes start with no adults ensuring or motivating me to do these tasks. Instead, we have our esprit de corps that motivates us to do what needs to be done. Esprit de corps is something greater than us and can be defined in many different ways. I define it as how all of us, no matter our backgrounds, work together toward the common goal of improving in every aspect of cadet life.

My first day at CMA was a shock because I had to give up my electronics for two weeks, and I was constantly being yelled at by my classmates. It did not take me long to understand why I was being yelled at for every small mistake, but I realized these leaders weren't shouting at me because they liked to, they were doing so because they cared. But why did they care? I had known them for only two weeks and yet there was a bond building not just among us, but among everyone in the school. Most CMA cadets were sent and did not choose to come here; we all have our own story and are getting a second chance. The student leaders are like big brothers, as we all live in the same place and are looked up to for guidance. The military standard maintains the balance, as we are in our positions to motivate others to improve as individuals, not to turn them into soldiers. The rank I wear means nothing outside of school, Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Yohann Bernard Xavi... who cares! So then, why do I wear it? It is important to me because it shows that, even though I have had a rough past, I have been able to make it, and it is all thanks to Student Leadership. I was tired of listening to adults because they didn't "understand me". In high school, you need guidance and leadership from your peers.

Student leadership means motivating your peers to excel in every aspect and ensuring that no one falls behind. The Junior Leadership members are picked for their leadership skills in their community. I know that all of us will continue to rise up as leaders no matter where we are, because we are truly important to the people who surround us. Junior Leadership and Camden Military Academy have given me the building bricks for my foundation, and now I'm off to college and will gather the bricks around me so that one day I will soar.

Each year, every high school in Kershaw County selects several students to participate in Kershaw County's leading Junior Leadership program. Junior Leadership students participate in activities that help them become more active in their communities, schools, and lives. Students meet in monthly sessions and cover many important leadership topics: government, public speaking, job interviews, community involvement, team building, rope courses, table etiquette, and much more.

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