



JAG: MY SAFE PLACE

Martin County JAG Kentucky

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Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." As a member of JAG Kentucky, these words mean a lot to me and my fellow members. In the JAG program, working together is crucial in order to prepare participants to be leaders in their personal and professional lives. My fellow classmates and I have the opportunity to create a tight-knit bond while also helping the members of our community.

My JAG program has allowed me to give back to my community in a multitude of ways. We've participated in many different community service projects such as Trunk or Treat, creating Valentines for the Nursing Home, making an appreciation video for our board of education, and helping out with the Christmas in the Mountains celebration. Being able to participate in projects like Trunk or Treat and Christmas in the Mountains is very important to me because it allows me and my classmates to provide the children in our community with opportunities and experiences that I wasn't provided in my youth.

When I was young, I was separated from both of my parents and put into the custody of my grandmother along with my sisters. Growing up, my grandmother struggled to provide for all of her grandchildren and we often couldn't afford to get the same experiences as other kids around us. Me and my sisters were often left out by our peers, but when I joined JAG, I found where I belonged and I realized that I can be anything I want to be, no matter what background I come from. Many of my closest and most meaningful friendships have been made through JAG, and I've learned some of the most valuable lessons through this program, like the importance of working together.

My JAG programs Christmas in the Mountains and Trunk or Treat programs would not have been successful if we didn't have all of our members working together to make them the

best that they could be. Our hard work and dedication to our projects proved to be worth it in my eyes. Throughout these experiences I had the opportunity to see the effect our projects have on children in my community. I got to see them light up with joy when they received our Halloween candy or when they watched our dancers at the Christmas in the Mountains celebration. In these projects, I've seen kids form friendships and find a place where they can be themselves and as these kids grow older, I've seen them join JAG and continue giving back to their community and living up to their full potential. Seeing how much of an impact our work can have on the children in our community, I can't help but wish that these JAG projects had been around when my sisters and I were young. JAG KY has the power to change lives, and all it takes is a community working together.