

There's more to the story- "It takes a Village that knows no borders"

Sophia K. Griffith

Pinecrest High School, Southern Pines



My library story is an unlikely one, but one that has shaped me into the person I am today. From unstable beginnings, the intervention of libraries and literacy programs in my life served as a space of immense support from community leaders and family. Though my local community, I am fortunate enough to have a trusted Village, working together to assist me in every way. My name is Sophia Griffith and I live in Pinehurst, North Carolina. I am 15 years old and attend Pinecrest High School. I am a freshman who maintains 4.0 GPA through rigorous coursework such as Honors Biology, Honors NC Math II, Honors World History, and Honors English, and Arabic. I am a three sport athlete, maintaining good standing on as a JV Cross Country runner, JV/ Varsity Women's Wrestler, and Varsity 1600M track athlete. I am a Girl Scout, Civil Air Patrol Cadet, have played Clarinet in band since 6th grade, as well as remained active in my local church. I volunteer on Sundays at Southern Pines Library, where I assist the local staff with managing shelving and organization of books. My mother is active duty military and has served in the Army for over 16 years and my step-father for over 28 years. Through an ever changing home dynamic and demands of everyday life, I have always found solace and comfort in the power of libraries, reading, and literacy.

Libraries are important to me because they provide a sense of hope. They serve as a hub, a nucleus, that empower Americans to imagine who they can become, no matter the background. I highlighted some of the accomplishments in my young life but none of these were possible without community, hard work, access to education, and the role literacy and libraries have played in my life. Though my mother has served in the military for the entirety of my life, we did not always have access to libraries. I bounced state to state, staying with various family members so my mother could serve our country. She first deployed when I was 2 months old and would again three more times before I could

finish middle school. When in the United States, our lives were equally flexible due to the demands of military life. When I was in the 3rd grade I was illiterate, having fallen behind academically due to adjustment issues to military life and multiple deployments. I went to school on Fort Campbell at the time, and I was put into a literacy intervention program that changed my life. I discovered a love of reading as was able to access resources within the school library. I worked hard my 4th grade year, using the tools instilled in me the previous year, and maintained academic honors through middle school. The power of libraries and literacy is not unique to me, as over the years I have seen firsthand people young and old inspired within them. A library is indeed a place which knows no boundaries. I was able to begin volunteering in school libraries across various states in an effort to pay back the gift given to me: opportunity.



Libraries have impacted me personally because they served as a place where I could access information without regard to my circumstance. Whether I want to explore astrophysics, improve my Arabic vocabulary, brush up on how to prepare for standardized test, or participate in STEAM events, libraries have welcomed me and everyone in my community without regard to who I am or where I am from. Whether I was local or military, rich or poor, happy or sad, literate or illiterate, my local library has always remained a constant safety net for me. I was so positively impacted by the impact libraries made on me that I became a volunteer at the Southern Pines Library, in Southern Pines NC. Every Sunday for three hours, I am able to give back to my community by assisting in daily task such as returning books, prepping arts and crafts, and interacting with the patrons. The library staff has become an extension of my Village, and serve as trusted adults who have assisted me in my successes outline in my introduction.

Libraries are timeless, and have molded some of our national treasures, such as Astronaut Ronald McNair, who had humble beginnings in a library which was once segregated but is now named after him. I often wonder who, in my local library, is a future Ronald McNair. I believe libraries are an even playing field where the answer is simple: anyone.



Libraries are important to the future of North Carolina because they directly touch the hearts and minds of the communities where they stand. Libraries provide access to information without borders, but there is still more work to be done. When I initially moved to North Carolina, I lived in a County where the library was a 20 minute drive away. While my parents had the ability to drive me to and from the library, I can't help but remember the early years of my life where this wasn't possible. Access to public libraries and the resources they provide is a right to all North Carolinians. I am confident there is a future Ronald McNair, US President, lawmaker, welder, farmer, inventor, craftsman- you name it, within our community who is in need of the interventions I received as a child that shaped me into the woman I will become. North Carolina has become my final spot, my home, as my parents military service is coming to an end. I worked hard over the years, taking advantage of local community resources offered through libraries to continue to be inspired by the future I have in this great state. I work hard to remain balanced, always falling back to my library to boost me to the next level. I applied to the United States Naval academy Summer STEM program, which is highly competitive and only takes 5% of applicants. I was selected, but not by my own ability. I was selected due to the investments libraries and local communities put into me when I was unaware of my potentials. I am confident there are plenty of North Carolinians who just need a hub, nucleus, steady place, such as a local library, to

inspire them as well. I would love serve as an Ambassador, and hope to reach communities on the power of their local library. I am thankful for the opportunity, and appreciate your consideration.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have been selected for the
2023 Naval Academy Summer
STEM Program!



Dear Sophia,

Your Assigned Session is: 2023 Summer STEM
Session 2

It is our pleasure to inform you that you have been selected for the 2023 Naval Academy Summer Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Program! Summer STEM is an incredible opportunity. The program will allow you to explore, create, build, and expand your critical thinking and collaboration skills, all while experiencing world-class facilities at one of the country's top engineering programs.

It is our pleasure to inform you that you have been selected for the 2023 Naval Academy Summer Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Program! Summer STEM is an incredible opportunity. The program will allow you to explore, create, build, and expand your critical thinking and collaboration skills, all while experiencing world-class facilities at one of the country's top engineering programs. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to experience the exceptional Naval Academy education provided to Midshipmen while interacting with like-minded students who share an interest in STEM.

You can expect to meet students from across the United States and overseas, along with a cadre of midshipmen who will serve as mentors and co-instructors with our faculty. Historically, we receive over 5,000 applications, of which only 280 students per session are typically chosen. We are thrilled to have you join us for the 2023 program. Submit general questions to summerstem@usna.edu. Please include your name in the subject line.