



**American  
Red Cross**

Youth Action Campaign

# Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp Youth Action Campaign

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC) Cadets from Franklin High School in Somerset, New Jersey competed in the American Red Cross Youth Action Campaign for the 2023-2024 school year, with a focus on the destructive effects of nuclear weapons in warfare and how the law manages these dangers.

July 2024

The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is a program implemented in high schools across the United States and overseas with an overall goal to promote young people to be better citizens. Their lessons educate students on military history, physical fitness, drill, ceremony, and leadership. Like the American Red Cross, JROTC programs also aim to focus on ethical leadership, create a sense of moral responsibility, and emphasize respect of human rights.

In any successful project, the strength of the team is a pivotal factor. The JROTC team from Franklin High, led by Senior Army Instructor (Ret.) Major J. Vazquez, created a team to take on the challenge. Cadets Ethan Ragbir, Sophia Peralta Cardenas, Yafriela Escalante Nova, Jordan Thigpen, and Aashinee (Sierra) Narine each took it upon themselves to give it their all for months on end and played key roles as individuals in the creation of their campaign. Delegating their work accordingly and ensuring everyone understood the importance of their positions, the group took on a task unlike anything they had done before. The team faced many challenges such as low motivation from peers and scheduling conflicts and adapted to situations that arose during the planning and execution of their projects.

This year's cadets began their project early in their academic school year, splitting it into different phases. The cadets began by teaching a class/hosting an information session on international humanitarian law, briefing roughly one hundred and eighty fellow cadets on its importance. They then allowed students to apply their newfound knowledge of IHL to various case studies. After, a competition was held within their battalion to create a brochure to spread awareness to their community. This brochure would highlight the importance of laws surrounding nuclear weapons and their effects on people and places. The winning cadet needed to make the brochure eye-catching, provide correct and unbiased information, and use easy to comprehend language. The chosen brochure was subsequently handed out at another event hosted by

the cadets, where over one hundred additional parents and faculty were reached within the school. The students, parents, and faculty who attended were then asked to share the brochure digitally across social media platforms, expanding the reach to another ten thousand people.

Following the completion of their campaign, the Franklin Warrior Battalion reflected, both on the project itself, its ups and downs, and how they and their community were impacted. Generally, the students developed a new passion for spreading awareness on issues they had never thought about previously. Faculty also contacted the team, thanking them for spreading awareness and their dedication. Finally, the group created an eight-minute video which described their project's process, goals, community outreach, and statistics and featured some of the cadets and staff sharing their new understanding of the importance of international humanitarian law post-project.

The key focus of this project for the Franklin Warrior Battalion cadets was communication. To be successful, the team needed to communicate not only amongst themselves, but also with their peers, staff, and community members, reflecting their focus on spreading awareness through all means of communication. The group learned more about their communities by helping to educate them, and many cadets further developed an understanding of their roles in society. The advice from this year's battalion for those who plan to participate in the Youth Action Campaign through the American Red Cross in the future is to host a class on International Humanitarian Law before focusing on the theme of the year. It is also important, they highlight, to teach others in ways that keep their fellow cadets interested and willing to participate. Finally, they encourage using any and all resources available to future cadets, such as case studies, to encourage deeper thinking. Overall it was a rewarding experience, educating cadets on modern issues and creating a desire to be a part of their solutions.

**SUMMARY:** Somerset New Jersey's Franklin High School Warrior Battalion Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) team competed in this year's Youth Action Campaign in spreading awareness of the dangers of nuclear warfare. Their participation included outreaches to fellow cadets, use of case studies to emphasize the importance of International Humanitarian Law, and a battalion wide brochure creation competition, as well as social media publications reaching over ten thousand community members. The team's main take away from the project was the importance of communication and using their voices to spread awareness.