

## Patriots Pen

My first encounter with Patriotism wasn't in the textbooks, it was within my family. From hearing the National Anthem with my dad, to watching the Fourth of July parade with my sisters. I started to understand why we love this flag as much as we do. As I've grown up, Patriotism grew to be more than a word and into an action.

An action that helped me learn about patriotism was visiting nursing homes. Originally I didn't go there to talk to veterans, but after overhearing a story about someone who survived I felt like I had to know more. His stories of war still have me hoping someone loves him as much as he loves his country. That action has me feeling freedom for our flag that flows in the wind. Without the veterans who fought for us, where would we be now?

Soldiers lead in the war, kind of like how I lead in my community. Playing on a sports team means someone is always showing leadership. Whether it is the coach or a teammate we all have led before. I think leadership is one of the most important skills someone should learn. It teaches us how to be better people. By leading we are showing that we can have courage and not let our fears hold us back. People will always talk bad about someone. Leadership proves that someone will take charge and not fear what others around them think.

In third and fourth grade I wrote about 20 letters to veterans. It was our way of showing thankfulness and gratitude to those who risked their lives to give us freedom. We mailed them out and it made me feel good about myself. Just a piece of paper with a few words could change someone's entire day. Some veterans wrote back, thanking us and giving us little tokens like pins. One of my classmates still has hers.

My first encounter with Patriotism wasn't in the textbooks, it was within my family. Then it grew into my school, community, state, and life. Every time I'm in the car, I see an American flag. In the grocery store, I see a veteran. Patriotism wasn't always there, but now it will be. To those who fought for us will never be forgotten, at least not by me.