



Cadet MWO Mashaeh Saleh, Halifax Rifles Cadet Corps presented the Major General Howard Award on 7 June 2009 by Her Honour Mayann E. Francis, ONS the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia

**CADET SPEECH. - Halifax, 28 November 2009
Nova Scotia Branch, Army Cadet League of Canada
Cadet MWO Mashaeh Saleh – Halifax Rifles Cadet Corps**

Oh boy!

Good afternoon everyone, I hope you're all having a good time so far. My name is Mashaeh Saleh. As you can probably tell from the uniform, I am an Army Cadet and have been for quite some time now. I'm here to talk to you a little bit about the cadet program, and what it has done for me. I hope you'll bear with me through it all.

Cadets is a program that's changed my life and opened up various doors for me. When I look back at my accomplishments, I notice that a lot of them are due to cadets. Even the way I react in situations has changed because of cadets. Cadets isn't just a program that

keeps you busy a few nights during the week. It gives you opportunities to travel, meet new people, to become a better leader and most importantly a better version of yourself.

My favourite part of Cadets is the people I've met along the way. Through years at my cadet corps here in Halifax, national competitions, and summers away at training centres, I have met some of the most amazing people. These people have made a huge impact on my life. Despite the fact that I may not see some of them anymore, the impression they left will always be there. I thank the cadet program for making all of that possible.

Coincidentally, the worst part of Cadets for me is leaving those very same people. After every summer, we all have to say our goodbyes, and as the years go by, people start to age out of the program. Just knowing you might not see these people again is disappointing. However, at the same time, I'm grateful for having the opportunity to have met them and trained alongside them.

Some of the most exciting things that have ever happened to me occurred this summer in Alberta. I was lucky enough to go train at Rocky Mountain National Army Cadet Summer Training Centre near Banff, Alberta. We were enrolled in a program that focused on adventure and leadership challenges. The adventure factored in with all the different cycles every week, like Glacier climbing, Mountain Biking, White Water Kayaking, Rock Climbing and Hiking. Throughout these cycles, we learned a lot about ourselves, our limits and about each other. It became crucial to trust each other and work together all the time. At one point of the rock cycle, we were expected to literally put our lives in the hands of our fellow cadets. While we climbed up a rock face, the other person would hold the rope that might have to catch your fall.

I truly believe that Rocky Mountain was the best summer of my life. If I could, I would tell every single person out there to join Cadets, so that they could experience those amazing 6 weeks. Everything I have invested in cadets was made worthwhile, because it led me to such an amazing, memorable summer away!

Now I will speak to 'exchanges'. This year, our Cadet Corps was lucky enough to participate in the I.C.E. I was so excited when I first heard about it. As it unfolded, we were being hosted by a sea cadet corps in Lamaline, Labrador. This exchange was absolutely wonderful. It allowed for us to experience a different culture than our own, and to see for ourselves the absolute beauty of the nature out there. It was incredible meeting all the people we were exposed to in Labrador, who were so genuinely happy to have us there. Their amazing hospitality and warmth made it one of the best vacations. Because, to be honest, that is exactly what it felt like!

One of the most important things that I have found through Cadets is biathlon. This sport became really important to me. Four years ago, when I first started biathlon, it was another opportunity to better myself, to improve my health and once again, to travel and meet new people, something which I love to do. Today, I consider biathlon to be a part of who I am and I cannot imagine how different my life would be without it. Because of biathlon, I've met some of my best friends, and I've traveled to Summerside, P.E.I for

provincial championships on a few occasions. When I think back to those times, I realize they were some of my fondest memories.

Speaking of fond memories, National Star Certification Examinations (NSCE for short) this year was a very unique experience. I remember studying for weeks and stressing out about what is the hardest exam in the cadet program. The weekend of biathlon provincials, I took my NSCE book with me, and every spare minute I was looking at it. When I arrived at the NSCE examination place, Shearwater, my anxiety and stress dissolved, and I instantly relaxed seeing all those familiar faces around me. All the gold star cadets from every corner of Nova Scotia had come to the Navy base in Shearwater to take part of this national process. That's the other thing about Cadets; it has the undoubted ability to bring people together. Anyway, we had several things that we were tested on, and at the end, our marks are averaged out. This exam was the most general of all exams I've ever written. It tested bushcraft, knots, physical fitness, map and compass skills, drill and classroom teaching capabilities and the history of the army cadet program. Through a lot of hard work and preparation in the weeks and months before hand, I found that I did exceptionally well. All of this is thanks to the many dedicated officers in our corps, who spent most of their training nights preparing us and helping us organize our time.

Later that same weekend, in the parade that proceeded out final testing, I earned 2nd, placing after another cadet from our Cadet Corps. The difference between our two averages was microscopic, in the hundredths of a percent. However, the number of years in the cadet program played a factor in this situation, and since she was unfortunately a few months short (less time in Cadets than I had), the award was handed down to me. I was really surprised and quite stunned at receiving the Major General Howard award. Reflecting back, that medal is still something I take great pride in. But, despite all that, I still consider myself to be in second place. Kaylin Dean had studied harder than anyone I have ever met, and she had a sense of dedication that pushed her forward. I know that my colleague had truly earned that medal, and service years can't change that. Knowing all of this, the meaning of this medal has changed to me. Whenever I see it, I remember not only my own success, but hers as well. In a way, NSCE taught me more than just bush craft, or map and compass; it taught me about fairness, the value of hard work, and thanks to Kaylin Dean, I experienced firsthand the grace of sportsmanship.

One thing I truly appreciate about the Cadet program is the doors, the opportunities, it opens. I never really saw all the opportunities available until this year. Being in grade 11 now, we are encouraged to look at universities, thinking about our future and getting serious about the direction our lives are taking. I recently found out that my Cadet Corps grants scholarships. Upon hearing this, I thought: "What better way is there to encourage the youth of today to strive for higher learning?" In a similar sense, the Cadet program has also given me a taste of the structured world of the military. Because of my enrolment in Cadets, I can now make a really informed decision about going to RMC, or about joining the Reserves. Consequently, it is also because of Cadets that I am seriously considering studying at a university with Reserves and giving back with service years in the time that follows my graduation.

In another sense, Cadets also opens doors in the way of international exchanges. There are an infinite number of exchanges that a cadet can apply for. Most of them take place during the summer, but some take place during Christmas break, like the New Zealand expedition that is happening in just a few short weeks. In my eyes, these exchanges are priceless. They broaden one's mind, and extend one's horizons. They can immerse you in cultures from all over the world and really show you what could be waiting out there for you after school as an adult.

This summer, I'm really hoping to be accepted to the Maple Leaf Exchange. I've heard tell of all the amazing experiences that are offered through it. Personally, the very idea of Europe thrills me, let alone actually being able to be a part of it all even if only for a few weeks. I have so many hopes for the future when it comes to Cadets. I like to think that being a cadet for so many years has instilled this sense of ambition and motivation in me. I have learned to think about the long term and to take the opportunities as they come. And if they don't come, I can go looking for them.

In conclusion, I really believe from personal experience that Cadets is a life changing program. If you let it, it can alter your whole world for the better. I've matured and grown as a result of it and I'm grateful for everything that has come my way because of it. Seeing how much there is offered, I think the youth of today is really missing out. Cadets can bring out the leader in all of us, challenge us in so many ways and help us grow as people.

I have so many people to thank for who I am today, because I believe every experience and every person influences who you become. But first of all, I'd like to thank my best friend Clare, who got me into Cadets. To this day, I don't think she knows how much she has actually done for me. I'd like to thank all the hard working staff at our Cadet Corps for making sure that we all got the opportunities we deserved. Most of all I would like to thank our league director, retired Major James Jollata. After all, everything I've talked about wouldn't have been possible without the League's partnership with DND and the Canadian Forces, and their continuous support of the Army Cadet program. It is appreciated.

And finally, I'd like to thank you all for having me here to speak with you today. You were a great audience and I wish you all the best. (Thank you or good afternoon.)

NOTES

From audience questioning in the Q&A which followed it was learned:

- that this cadet has been in Canada 4½ years

- she is 16 years old

- she immigrated with her parents from Amman, Jordan

- English is not her first language; she learned English after immigrating

- her ambition is to attend university and attain a degree in medicine

- she will remain in cadets until she reaches the age of 19.