

Military OneSource Podcast – Military Youth and Teen Programs

Program title: Youth and Teen Programs

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast, I'm Bruce Moody. I invite you to listen to today's episode because this will be proof that there is hope for the future. I mean that when we look at the challenges of the day – and there are many, we wonder if the next generation is up for the tasks that frankly, we're handing them. My guest today is Asha, a young woman from a military family. I know the conversation that you're going to hear today will give you hope for the future. Asha, welcome to the podcast.

Asha:

Hi. I'm so excited to be here. So excited and blessed.

Bruce:

Yeah, yeah. We're excited to have you here. We're excited to hear your plan for saving the world that we're presenting to you. But I want to explain how we got to learn about you. You've been active. Yeah, you've been active with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and were recently named Military Youth of the Year. And congratulations for that. And I want to get into that by way of learning about you and your background. So, kind of tell us a little bit about your family. Where were you born, what branch and stuff like that?

Asha:

Yes, of course. I was actually born in Virginia Beach, so I am connected to the military through my stepdad, who I call my dad, and my older brother. My dad was retired from the Air Force for 25 years, and so, in the middle of my eighth-grade year, we actually had to move down to Georgia and start completely over. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness." A year into high school, my sophomore year, my brother goes to our local teen center on the Navy base. And I remember he just came home and he was just raving about it. And I remembered how excited he was and I was like, "Wow, this must be a really cool place."

And so, I remembered then a couple months later, my mom was like, "You know what, Asha? I want you to go to the teen center." So, I went in there and I remember there was one girl. And

she sits down and she talks to me about Boys & Girls Clubs of America. And oh, my gosh, even thinking about it now, I just smile because I remember how much my face lit up when I heard about all of the amazing opportunities. And so, it was an immediate just warmth and love that I will just never forget, and I felt seen.

Bruce:

My question, as you started to discover the Boys & Girls Clubs of America for what it was and what it had to offer, what were your goals and your ideas beforehand, and how did looking at this rocket ship of an organization change things, did you end up with new goals or maybe goals on a different scale?

Asha:

So, when I was introduced to BGCA, my goal, I was looking for opportunities for public speaking because I knew that's what I loved and it's what I wanted to pursue with. I didn't have a blueprint or a map of how to pursue that. I remembered first thing I ever did with BGCA was a talent competition. And I remember I said my speech. And I remembered Miss Maria was like, "Oh, Asha, read these comments." And I remember seeing all the advisers freaking out, "This girl's ama..." What in the world? How did she feel like this is so amazing? Yes, girl, all this different stuff. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness." The door was open and BGCA was like a laid-out plan. I had a plan for how to achieve my goals.

So, I said, "OK, how can I start?" First, I want to start by joining some of the clubs that they have. The Presidential Circle, the Keystone Club, I took every opportunity my adviser threw in front of me. I was grabbing everything UPS Road Code, national ambassador. I was trying to get exposure to as many things as possible because my goal at that point was, how can I become well-rounded? How can I diversify myself and have different things to talk about? And so, when I am writing my speeches, I'm writing from different perspectives and different experiences that I've had. And so, that became my goal; my goal was how can I become more of a well-rounded person. How can I learn and grow as a young woman? Because now I'm looking toward college and becoming a young woman. So BGCA was setting me up for my future, which was different than what I was experiencing in high school.

Bruce:

I have a question about being a well-rounded person. Talk to me, why is it important to you to become a well-rounded person, and what sort of disciplines do you have to employ to make that happen?

Asha:

Yes. So, I remembered one of the biggest influences that my stepdad had on me was obviously being in the military; he was very strict. We got to be on time, we got to go. But one thing he drilled into me was, "What are you going to bring to the table and how are you going to be a well-rounded person?" He's like, "Asha, there's so much more to life than just being a public speaker. You need to have experiences in different things so you're able to connect with different people." And he presented being a well-rounded person to me as something that not only would it benefit me in the workforce, but in life, like friendships and all these different relationships that I would make, and being able to connect with people. Being a well-rounded

person is a benefit for just life in general, not just the career field. And so, what he told me is you have to be open to trying different things.

Bruce:

OK. Let me turn back to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and their Military Youth of the Year program. What was your motivation to going into this? Did you have a message or a goal that you thought that this program could allow you to convey or pursue?

Asha:

Yes. So, I remember when Ms. Maria first told me about the Youth of the Year program, I was like, "No, I don't really think I'm military enough for that." There was always still that insecurity that because I wasn't active duty or because I didn't have active-duty parents, I wasn't qualified to compete in the competition. And that's when she told me the term "military-connected teens." And I was like, "Wow, there's so many different ways. Teens are connected to the military." The military is so diverse; it's not just active duty. Like I said, there's so many layers to what the military is. And with that, there's so many different layers and ways that people are connected. So, I remember when I found that out, I was like, "All right, so I can do the competition. I'll go in there and do my best."

I honestly feel like my goal has always been the same. It's to show people that your story has value. You were not placed in this earth for an accident. You were placed with a purpose. You have something about you that is going to inspire and help other people, whether it's public speaking or art, or even welding. You don't know how you can influence another person. Well, you can't make that judgment when you haven't given yourself the opportunity to share your story with people to see if it'll help another person. And so honestly, that was my goal going into the competition, like, "Man, I just want to share my story to people."

Bruce:

Now, you're currently with Regent University at Virginia Beach.

Asha:

Yes.

Bruce:

Studying marketing and communication. How did you come to choose those majors and do you have an idea of what you want to do with them?

Asha:

So, my goal is to become a motivational speaker. I remember actually talking to my math tutor, who I said was my life coach. And I remember he was like, "Asha, I think that's great." But he's like, "Well, who's your target audience? How are you going to market your speeches and yourself to different people, to different companies?" And I was like, "Oh, man." Well, marketing would benefit me more in that area. And I'm interested in learning about the behind the scenes, I guess, of how I would market my speeches and myself to audiences. And even when it comes to writing speeches, who's your target audience? What message do you want?

How are you going to make your audience feel like that message applies to them? And so, I remember after that conversation, I talked to my parents. I said, “Hey, I’m switching my major. I’m going to major in marketing with a minor in communications.” But I felt like, honestly, I would get a bigger benefit in what I wanted to do coming out of college with a major in marketing. So, that’s kind of how I came to my current situation in my major.

Bruce:

Well, we look forward to tracking all the things that you do this year and off into your future. Any final words before we depart?

Asha:

I mean, for me, again, I am just so thankful for this opportunity and I really hope that people get out of this. Who you are, you don’t have to know who you are right now. And it’s OK to mess up. It’s OK to make mistakes, but give yourself grace. Give yourself time to learn and grow and explore new things. If I didn’t explore new things, I would not be on this podcast call right now. There’s anything you take away from this podcast. Your story and who you are as a person genuinely has value and genuinely will inspire somebody else in this world. So don’t give up. Keep pushing through whatever hardship you’re going through. Know that you are unique and you have value, you have purpose, and that someone else is going to see that and someone else is going to be inspired by that.

Bruce:

We’re thrilled to get to know you. Thank you so much. Keep in touch. We’re going to have you back on the podcast, no question. Because there’s more to follow in this space, no doubt. Asha, thank you so much for joining us today.

Asha:

Thank you.

Bruce:

And I want to remind everybody that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We are a website, we’re a call center. We’re all over social media, and we are now a podcast. So go ahead and subscribe because we cover a whole range of topics to help military families navigate military life.

I’m Bruce Moody. Thank you so much for listening. Bye-bye.