



# THE BLACK KNIGHTS' SWORD



DECEMBER 2023

## HONORED TO SERVE

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Cadet Sergeant Maria Lopez! She recently enlisted in the U.S. Army and the Sword caught up with her to ask a few questions about her journey:

**BKS:** Why did you join Army JROTC at Sam Houston?

**Lopez:** *I was to move by the end of my sophomore year to a new district. I was going to a new school for my junior year, and was upset to leave behind people I knew since elementary and being the student that fit in. I had to pick between two schools to go, one was a known school for highly smart kids, as I do more than the minimum. But then, I saw Sam Houston, they stood out for having JROTC. I always dreamed to be an Army Soldier someday. I wanted a bit of experience in my high school years, yet whenever I arrived, I doubted myself if I was even going to ever be a good enough of a cadet. But they proved me wrong and showed me more of myself then I ever knew.*

**BKS:** What inspired you to consider service in the U.S. military? And why did you pick the U.S. Army?

**Lopez:** *The one thing that inspired me was when I would meet Army soldiers, I saw them as such confident and mentally/physically strong individuals that I aspire to ever be. The U.S. Army is the one that feels correct to lead my path. I am aiming to become a pilot, specifically for the UH 60 Black Hawk or even any helicopter. I believe serving to the country is what I am meant for. I am someone willing to help many people even if means giving it my all.*



**Cadet Sergeant Maria Lopez** enlisted into the United States Army in November as an Aviation Operations Specialist. She has earned the G.I. Bill, College Tuition Assistance, Job Training, full health insurance, and opportunities to see the world.

**“TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE BETTER CITIZENS”**

## HOUSTON MSTC ARMY JROTC



**BKS:** Good and bad, give a few examples of experiences you have had in the program.

**Lopez:** *I've had many experiences within the program, but one that stood out the most was when I was in the primary color guard with the rifle. It is an unforgettable experience since I had not thought of ever being capable of getting to that point to doing all that with the rifle. I am honored of having that medal of number 1 in Fall Classic. My teammates were so much helpful and motivating for me to get there when I was nervous of competing for the 1st time for JROTC. I've had bad experiences as well such as over exhausting myself and fainted before practice one day, leading to my mentality and physical health to deteriorate for days. I looked to exceed my capabilities and fit to expectations. I have now learned that it was a lesson to give importance to me and my own goals towards my dream above anything else.*

**Lopez:** *I want to thank every instructor, Coach Adam that believed in me and motivated me to do much more than my limits and see my potential. My color guard teammates that were there and considered me one of them and everyone else that lend me a hand to get me up and be who I am now.*



**BKS:** Share any final thoughts you have about joining the Army and discuss the process.

**Lopez:** *The Army may look intimidating, trust me I thought so too. But becoming more interested to know more, you will start to realize it is much more than that. You get a supportive community, develop leadership skills, and education to attain knowledge and personal growth. All these things get you to get comfortable with the environment of the military and become a great person to admire from. The process is quite long since a lot of your knowledge and physical tests are to be done. But as someone who has always placed attention to school, even if it bored me, it was a smooth process. The most difficult process is for those that aren't fit like a soldier. It will be hard at first to push every limit, but the results feel great to see.*

**The BKS thanks Maria Lopez for the words of wisdom, and we wish her well in her future endeavors with the U.S. Army.**

**Above; Lopez after induction ceremony into the National Honor Society in 2022**

**Below: Lopez serving cadets at Thanksgiving potluck 2022**



**Center: Lopez interviewing American Legion Commander during "Day of Giving" in 2022 which benefited veterans in the community.**

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## SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS



**Part of the Army JROTC curriculum is for cadets to plan and execute service-learning projects. Service learning differs from community service in that community service can be viewed as a punishment and participants may not learn valuable life lessons. With service learning, cadets identify a need in the community and then plan to meet that need.**



**Above:** 1B class, led by company commander Allan Echeverria, planned a “Administrator Appreciation Day,” where the cadets made thank you cards, coffee, and served them with sweet bread to the staff. Each cadet in the class was tasked to participate either in making the cards, making the coffee, or delivering the goods to the staff. Dr. Linares thanked the cadets for their efforts and enjoyed himself a good cup of Joe.

**Left:** 3<sup>rd</sup> period, led by company commander David Barajas, planned and executed a “Tribute to Veterans” athletic competition that served as a reminder to all students that Veterans Day was at hand. They coordinated with the U.S. Army recruiters to have enough fitness competitions at lunch to serve the community. The mission was to make all students and faculty aware that Veterans should be honored for what they have done for this country.

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## HOUSTON MSTC ARMY JROTC

### **“FUN” RAISIN’**

You get exactly what you pay for in life. The Black Knights understand that traveling to compete in San Antonio and Daytona Beach isn’t free. They understand that uniform maintenance isn’t free. The Black Knights are willing to work to achieve goals, and fundraising is part of that. In November, the battalion led by C/MAJ Jai Nava and C/CSM Frank Barajas organized a car wash and barbeque plate sale at Gallery Furniture with the support of the Mattress Mack.

The booster club assisted in the logistics from preparing the food and delivering the car wash materials, but the cadets were fully engaged in serving and washing. Mattress Mack commented that he is a fan of the Black Knights, and he will do what is required to support these students.

At the conclusion of the event, Jai Nava asked Mattress Mack if he would be the guest speaker at this year’s “Black and Gold Military Ball.” He tentatively agreed and asked for a reminder in January. The Black Knights will be honored to hear him speak to them about leadership and business at the ball. Thank you, Mattress Mack, for the support!



### **With Support Like This...**

It’s hard to fail. Ms. Moses and fellow teachers came out to support the Black Knights fundraising effort at Gallery Furniture, and the left with good hot food and a clean cars.

Left: Cadet Blanco and Ms. Moses after the car wash. She was a satisfied customer and supporter.

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## BATTLE OF THE BAYOU IN PASADENA, TX



### Sam Rayburn High School...

JROTC program hosted the annual Battle of the Bayou Drill competition in Pasadena, TX. The Black Knights were again up for the challenge. The armed drill team placed overall 1<sup>st</sup>, the female color guard placed overall 1<sup>st</sup>, the male color guard placed 3<sup>rd</sup>, the female Raider team placed overall 1<sup>st</sup>.

The **booster club** provided a great lunch for the cadets that was both healthy and nutritious.

**MVP:** Jai Nava displayed great strategic planning, physical prowess, and leadership motivating her teammates through all phases.



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**BATTALION COMMANDER**

Greetings to all, let of all acknowledge our Black Knights for paying tribute to our Veterans for all that they have done, for showing appreciation to our administrators, for working to achieve our goals, and pushing to their limits to win. Most of all, let's all congratulate C/SGT Maria Lopez who enlisted in the U.S. Army. Lastly, to all our cadets for working hard towards their own personal goals of becoming mentally and physically stronger. For themselves and for the individuals around them. They continue to jump over hurdles that placed to challenge them. Black Knights will continue to learn, grow, and overcome many obstacles as we move on to our next chapter. 5th Brigade!!!!!! OUR Battalion is still rocking and rolling as we head towards the end of this semester. Let's go Black Knights.



**COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR**

Greetings to all, The Black Knights continue to be on a roll as they begin to sell popcorn to raise funds for upcoming competitions. Cadets are doing great things inside the classroom and outside the classroom as they prepare for another upcoming 5th Brigade Competition in San Antonio in January. There is much more coming from this historic program as we look to dominate next month in San Antonio. Best of luck to our cadets and may they continue to dominate GO BLACK KNIGHTS!!!



**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

As we reflect on the events and accomplishments of the past month, I am pleased with that has been accomplished, but there is still much work to be completed. Our Logistics officer is making sure we are on top for our inspection coming up. Let us show what we are capable of! I was grateful to see most of you here for our Thanksgiving Potluck and happy for the contributions you all brought with you. As the Black Knight Battalion, I expect all of you to continue to push on to complete work and finish your tasks. Continue to lead with excellence and have a happy holiday.

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