

MOAA Central Florida Chapter JROTC Cadet of the Year Recipients 2026

The MOAA Central Florida Chapter (Chapter) is awarding competitive Cadet of the Year scholarships to outstanding graduating JROTC cadets for the 25th consecutive year. This spring, the Chapter is awarding eight (8) \$1,000 merit scholarships to deserving graduating cadets. These scholarships are in addition to non-monetary MOAA JROTC Leadership Awards awarded to JROTC Detachment juniors.

The success of the Cadet of the Year scholarship program depends upon nominations of deserving cadets by the senior JROTC instructor at one of the 32 high schools in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties with JROTC detachments. The nominations are accompanied by a written recommendation from the nominating senior instructor.

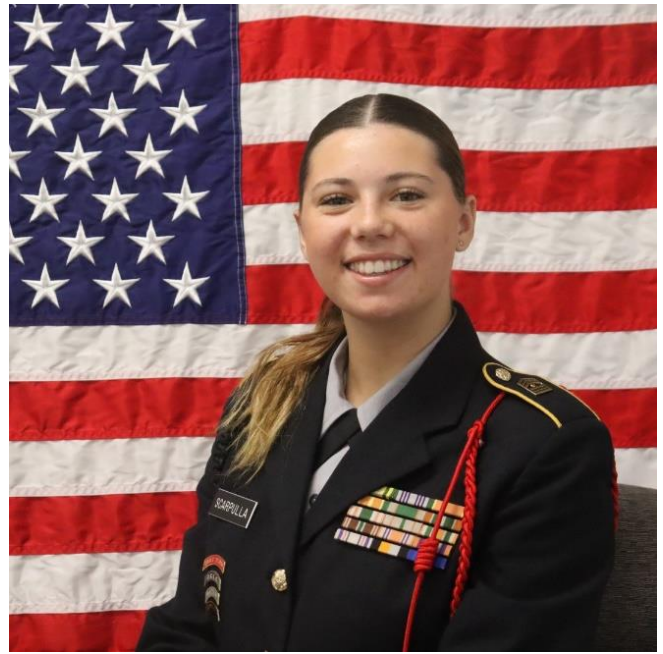
Each cadet nominated is interviewed in dress uniform by a diverse selection committee composed of three retired officers who are members of the Chapter. The interviews last approximately 15-20 minutes. Factors considered by the selection committee include, but are not limited to: military bearing and appearance in uniform, cadet JROTC assignments, Advanced Placement and Honors classes being taken or completed, GPA, school activities, service in the community and plans for future military service. The Chapter believes the cadets benefit from the interviewing process whether or not they win a scholarship because they will be interviewing for positions throughout their lives.

The Chapter has awarded 85 scholarships just the past nine years. These scholarships were awarded to cadets representing over 50% of the JROTC detachments in the three-county area.



Cadet Estella Wagner is a senior at Horizon High School and in her fourth year of JROTC, currently serving as the Battalion Executive Officer and was also the Raider Captain for the 2025–2026 school year. Cadet Wagner has been involved in lacrosse (main sport), golf, weightlifting, and Student Government for all four years of High School. After graduating, she will be attending Florida Atlantic University to continue her education through the Army ROTC program, with the goal of commissioning as an Officer in the United States Army after obtaining her degree.

Cadet Isabella “Izzy” Scarpulla is a senior at Horizon High School. Cadet Scarpulla has been in JROTC for three years, culminating as the Hawk Battalion Command Sergeant Major. She also served as captain of the girls’ lacrosse team for the past two consecutive years. After graduation, she will attend the University of Alabama “Roll Tide” to participate in Army ROTC and continue playing lacrosse, with the goal of commissioning as an Officer in the United States Army after obtaining her degree



Cadet Ryan Bauer is completing his 4th year in AFJROTC at Seminole High School. As a cadet Group Commander, he assists the Cadet Corps Commander manage and lead over 210 cadets. Last year, Cadet Bauer was selected to attend the AFJROTC Flight Academy, where he spent 8 weeks over the summer earning his Private Pilot License. His personal attributes, including a great attitude, outstanding intelligence, physical fitness, and dedication were key to his appointment to the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA).

Cadet Dylan Royal is completing his 4th year in AFJROTC at Seminole High School. He is the Deputy Corps Commander (Deputy Wing Commander) where he plays a central role in the success of the cadet program by working with the Corps Commander to ensure smooth operations of the cadet Wing. He truly is the linchpin to the entire program. His relaxed personality and dedication to the success of the cadet corps, make him a valuable member of the cadet corps. With many options open to him, he has chosen to enlist in the Navy as a diver and plans to work on his degree and possible commission while on active duty.





Cadet Mayra Feliciano, from Dr. Phillips High School, was selected as the winner of the 2025 Air Force JROTC “Cadet of the Year” Award, which makes her the #1 Air Force JROTC cadet in the World!! This is an amazing feat considering there are 800+ units and 95,000 cadets.

Cadet Mayra Feliciano has had a stellar 4 years at Dr. Phillips High School. She was handpicked to be the Cadet Wing Commander, which makes her responsible for 310 cadets, to include oversight of a 52-member leadership staff, as well as a 6-member executive staff. She has been on the Drill Competition Team, presented the Colors for a Color Guard on numerous occasions, and she is one of the best shooters on our Marksmanship team. She was also selected to the School’s National Honor Society and JROTC’s National Honor Society called Kitty Hawk.

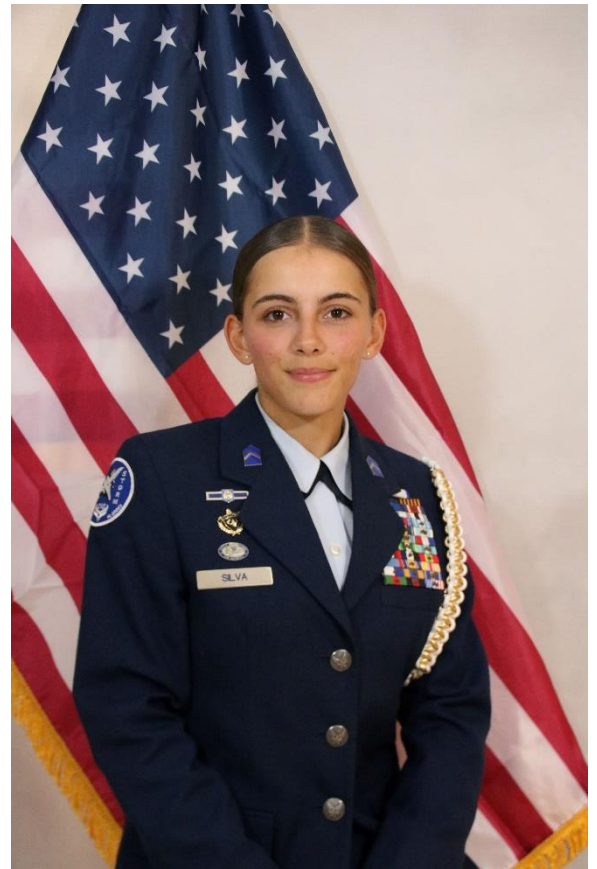
Cadet Feliciano is essential in the Aviation Academy at Dr. Phillips High School, which is a college-level, dual-enrollment program, sponsored by Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Through the Academy, she earned her FAA Drone License and passed her Private Pilot Ground School exam. Last year, she was selected to receive an Air Force JROTC Flight Academy Scholarship, which was only given to 194 Air Force JROTC cadets worldwide and is valued at roughly \$30,000. She attended an intense 9-week flight training program at the University of West Florida where she received her FAA Private Pilot Certification!

After graduation, Cadet Feliciano will be attending Wright State University in the class of 2030. She will be majoring in Aviation Science and Technology and will be enrolled in Air Force ROTC Detachment 643 and aiming for a pilot slot after commissioning. Her future career after college will be focused on flying for the Air Force, teaching people to fly, and having fun doing aerobatics.

Cadet Nevaeh Hawley is a senior at Timber Creek High School and has been a member of AFJROTC for all four years. She has served as OIC of Logistics and Squadron Commander before being selected this year to lead the unit as Group Commander of the Timber Creek AFJROTC unit. Nevaeh’s accomplishments and abilities were recognized by her selection to attend the USAF Flight Academy last summer. She was key in our unit earning an “Exceeds Standards” during our last inspection, earning a “Top Performer” award from the inspector. Her abilities combined with a calm demeanor has helped to bring our cadets together as a unit and kept them motivated throughout the year. Beginning this fall, she is planning on continuing her military experience at Liberty University while majoring in aviation.



Cadet Gabriely Silva is the Celebration High School Air Force JROTC programs #1 of 212 cadets! She leads all aspects of the Celebration AFJROTC program as our Cadet Group Commander. She trains and evaluates cadets in leadership and organization, orchestrates drill and uniform training and inspection across seven periods of instruction, plans and executes all Cadet Group activities, in and out of school, and she oversees nine after school teams. She has been the Commander of our Varsity Drill Team for the past three years and Color Guard for 2 years. Her leadership has led to Celebration being named the overall winner at over 15 major drill and PT competitions over the past three years and in almost every competition, she personally led her team to 1st Place for both the Varsity Drill Team sequence and Inspection categories and has been recognized as Best Commander on numerous occasions. In the past few months alone, at the Mainland March off and Kowboy Roundup Drill and PT Competitions, she led her team to 1st Place in both meets for Varsity Drill and ultimately led Celebration to being named the overall winner in both competitions. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Kitty Hawk Honor Society and numerous other school organizations. Gabby is also a selfless volunteer, having amassed over 160 volunteer hours just through JROTC. From Rotary to Veterans events, she does it all, you can even find her front and center at the KIA Center having presenting the Colors at numerous Orlando Magic games.



Cadet Shai Neudigate has been a JROTC cadet for 4 years at Windermere High School. Growing up in the Orlando area, he spent a lot of time with his grandparents who are both Air Force Veterans. Golfing with his grandfather was a highlight, with him being the inspiration for Shai to join the Army as an officer and pursue a career in Army Aviation. Outside of school, Shai enjoys volunteering with a local basketball league and hanging out with his friends. Cadet Neudigate has led the Wolverine Battalion as the commander to an outstanding year by accomplishing many “first” - “FIRST” time to make it to the State Raiders Team Competition; “FIRST” time to make it to the State Drill Team Competition; and achieving a 99.5 % in the unit’s “FIRST” JROTC Program Accreditation (JPA) ever! Truly and outstanding and superb leader!