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# THE ALUMNI CLIMB

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Not Held Back ; a JL spotlight



Diego Rayas (JL'13) is a busy young man with many responsibilities at home, but that does not seem to deter him from reaching out into his community. Diego is finding opportunities that help him look ahead. This past summer, Diego was able to meet with Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia. The Senator, being impressed with Diego and his interest in politics, took time to speak with him at the end of a day when most of the staff had departed for home. During the half hour meeting the two discussed politics, government, and policies. Having gone into the meeting prepared and ready, Diego noticed how the Senator “acted like a regular person, as if we were sitting down and having coffee together”.

Summer 2014, Diego Rayas (JL'13), meets with Senator Tim Kaine

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When Diego is not meeting with influential politicians, he can be found attending to his school work and extra curricula activities. At the moment, he is working out and conditioning for tennis, participating in the Spanish club and attending FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) meetings. The most enjoyable after-school time he spends is with the JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps). With this group he is able to participate with the drill team, rifle team, and saber team. Diego is also a reserve for the JROTC color guard. When asked why he is so involved with the JROTC he responds: "I like the discipline of the group and the regiment of the drill with the back and forth patterns."

This year Diego has been able to tour a few colleges around the state. He was selected as one of three tenth graders from his school to participate in the James Madison University "Duke for a Day" program. A chartered bus from the Richmond area travels to Harrisonburg where the students experience "a day in the life" as a JMU student. At this moment, he is looking seriously at James Madison University, University of Richmond, and Yale University. He would like to continue with the Army ROTC into college.

Diego has a parting thought for fellow Jacob's Ladder Climbers: "Where you come from never really defines where you are going. Your 'at-risk youth' is no reason to hold you back."

Thank you, Diego.



In 2012 at Jacob's Ladder, Diego, far right, helps send a care package to troops stationed overseas.