

U.S. Congresswoman Martha McSally Shares Her Own Academy Story With Catalina Foothills High School Students: “Who You Know Doesn’t Matter; Who You Are Matters”

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by Julie Farbarik

Tucson, AZ — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE As part of the Catalina Foothills High School (CFHS) College and Career Counseling Center’s ongoing college visit series, today United States Representative Martha McSally shared her story of how she chose to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy. Afterwards, she answered extensive questions from Foothills students on the process of applying to one of the five U.S. military academies.

“One of the advantages of the military academies,” Rep. Mc. Sally stated, “Is that you pay back your education in service to your country.”

McSally continued, “When I was in your shoes, I had no idea what I was doing, but I knew that education was the key in life. My dad came from humble circumstances. He was very driven and he wanted better opportunities than he had. Through his hard work and by serving his country through the Navy, he achieved a middle class life for his family. We were never in want or need. But when I was 12, my dad passed away. My life was turned upside-down dealing with that grief. My father always encouraged us to do something that made a difference, but I was angry and filled with grief.”

“When it was time to consider higher education, I was the fifth kid in our family trying to go to college and I didn’t want to saddle my mom with debt. I literally stumbled into my decision on going to the Air Force Academy. One day I came home and I was acting out. Just to get my mom’s attention, I told her that I was joining the army. Instead of acting shocked, my mom replied, ‘If you want to go the army, why don’t you go to one of the military academies?’ She spread all of the academies’ brochures on our dining room table, and I saw one with the Colorado Rockies on the cover. I picked up the Air Force Academy brochure. ‘This one looks good,’ I said.

“Most people at my school thought I would never make it. But the more I thought about it, I felt the discipline would be good for me, as a way to channel my grief. It wasn’t until I started at the Air Force Academy that I realized what I had gotten into, and then I realized that I wanted to be a fighter pilot.”

“Opportunities opened up for me because I was in the Academy. I got really focused and I channelled my energy where I could serve and make a difference. I became the first woman to fly in combat. I retired as a Colonel. I got a Master’s degree at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.”

McSally advised, “I encourage you to talk to your friends about the five service academies. These schools can be a game changer for an individual who might not be thinking about a career in the military. These academies can present life-changing opportunities for you, even if you have never considered serving your country.”

McSally went on to describe the two-part process which includes both an application and a nomination from McSally. After answering all of the students’ questions, she recommended that interested applicants to check their qualifications against each academy’s requirements and then to review her website for more information on the nomination process (mcsally.house.gov). On November 6, applications for nominations are due at McSally’s Tucson office.

Her best advice for the nomination interview: “Who you know doesn’t matter—who you ARE matters. Be your best self.”

For more information, please direct inquiries to:
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The Catalina Foothills School District is Tucson’s leading educational choice for PreK-12, educating many students living throughout the greater metro area. District schools offer a dynamic curriculum that engages students in deep learning taught by highly competent teachers who are held accountable for learning results – 97.5% of CFSD students graduate and 94% attend college. A CFSD education prepares students to become responsible citizens in the global community.

