

Good morning Co-Chair Broadman, Co-Chair Evans, and members of the committee. My name is Payton Grubb, but I have gotten pretty used to being called Cadet Grubb. I am from Bend, Oregon though I grew up in Southern California. I appreciate this amazing opportunity to speak with you today about the Oregon Youth Challenge High School and the life changing impact it has had on me.

Before OYCP, my life was spiraling downward. I was making poor choices and doing things I promised my parents I would never do—choices that nearly led me to jail or worse, death.

Growing up, I struggled to find friends. I was the quiet kid with glasses—the one nobody wanted to be friends with. That changed when I met Sadie Raine. Sadie instantly became my best friend. We did everything together—whether a task needed two people or not, we just loved being in each other's presence.

Then my family decided to move to Bend. That meant leaving my only friend Sadie behind. I was hesitant and told my parents I didn't want to go but I didn't have a choice. Even after I moved, Sadie and I kept in contact, sharing every little detail of our lives.

You might be wondering what this has to do with why I'm here today.

One day, Sadie took what she thought was just a pain killer, but it was laced with fentanyl. That single pill stole her life. Sadie was all I had; she was my best friend, my foundation. I lost the foundation that kept my head up high and helped me make good decisions. What happens when a house loses its foundation? It crumbles, and I crumbled with it.

Nobody warned me how much it would hurt. I will never be able to talk to her again. That's when all of the “never agains” started to hit me. Sadie will never tell me I'm stupid for having a crush on some boy. Sadie will never go to the beach with me again. She will never ask me to do her hair or roll her eyes at me with the attitude I loved. We will never break our parents' rules just to spend time together and she will never be the maid of honor at my wedding like we always talked about as kids.

Sadie's life—her whole story—was over. Not even 17 years old and that was it. Sadie Raine has done everything she will ever do.

It seems so obvious to me now. It matters who you spend your time with, it matters how you spend your time because you never know how much of it you have left. Sadie had a short life, but the beauty she brought in that time will not be forgotten.

After Sadie passed away, I started skipping school for what I thought were good times. I never showed up for classes, and when I did I was never sober. I made poor choices about boys and prioritized bonfires, parties and alcohol over my future and my family. I thought drinking would numb the pain. And for a little while, it did. But it never made it go away.

I lost faith. I grew up in a religious household, but I stopped believing in God. How could a God who was supposed to be so “amazing” do something so cruel?

I lost everything.

I lost any motivation to keep living. I lost my parents not physically but mentally. I disappointed them. They looked at me so differently, but even though I was hurting them they never gave up on me when I completely gave up on myself.

I knew I needed to change. I knew change would not be easy, but hey life isn't easy. Life is painful, change is painful, but nothing is as painful as watching your life fall apart and feeling too hopeless to get up and do something about it.

I had to pick myself back up, not just for myself, but for my family and for my best friend Sadie Raine Loza whose life was cut way too short. Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together. That better thing was the opportunity to attend OYCP.

I began my journey at OYCP on January 9th. The moment I walked through those doors, reality hit me. I had been treating people like they didn't matter. I had been disrespecting my parents—the ones who gave me absolutely everything and most importantly I gave up on myself and the dreams that I had.

Today I am more respectful, more self-aware and not to mention extremely resilient.

Oycp has pushed me beyond what I ever thought I was capable of physically mentally and emotionally.

A few weeks ago I started experiencing severe stomach pain and ended up in the ER four times. I was placed on a physical training profile, meaning I couldn't participate in PT, my favorite part of the day. Being in constant pain and unable to train with my platoon made me feel worthless. but despite the frustration and the unanswered medical questions, I kept pushing.

At OYCP giving up is not an option.

When I went home for break, my parents saw the difference. They told me I carried myself with more confidence, that I held myself to a higher standard.

This program has given me opportunities I never imagined

I was chosen to be an orientation cadet, allowing me to share my story with other at-risk youth. I recently attended my first on-site orientation where I spoke to parents and their

children about my experiences. I saw their emotions, their tears. I saw their kids choosing to take the same challenge I did because of what I said.

I was also selected as 2nd squad's first Squad leader. I am pushing myself harder and harder everyday, improving both physically and mentally.

Along this journey, I met two girls who have become like family to me, one of whom Cadet Richards is here with me today. The friendships I've built at OYCP will last a lifetime.

Before this program I struggled with self-confidence and coping with life's hardships. Now I am stronger.

After graduating from OYCP with eight credits I plan to return to Mountain View High School and graduate with my diploma. Then, I plan to attend college to become an ultrasound technician. None of this would be possible without OYCP.

Thank you for supporting the Oregon Military Department and the Oregon Youth Challenge program. This program changes and Saves lives. It saved mine. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.