EYE OF THE STORM

HURRICANE BATTALION FALL 2026

MANATEE HIGH SCHOOL ARMY JROTC

HURRICANE BATTALION

LEADERSHIP
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE

EYE OF THE STORM

Created by Cadets, for Cadets. Inspired by Leadership, Service, and Excellence.

The ***Eye of the Storm*** is the official newsletter of Manatee High School JROTC, proudly created by Cadets for Cadets. Serving as the voice of our Battalion, each edition highlights the achievements, activities, and experiences that make the Hurricane Battalion a source of pride.

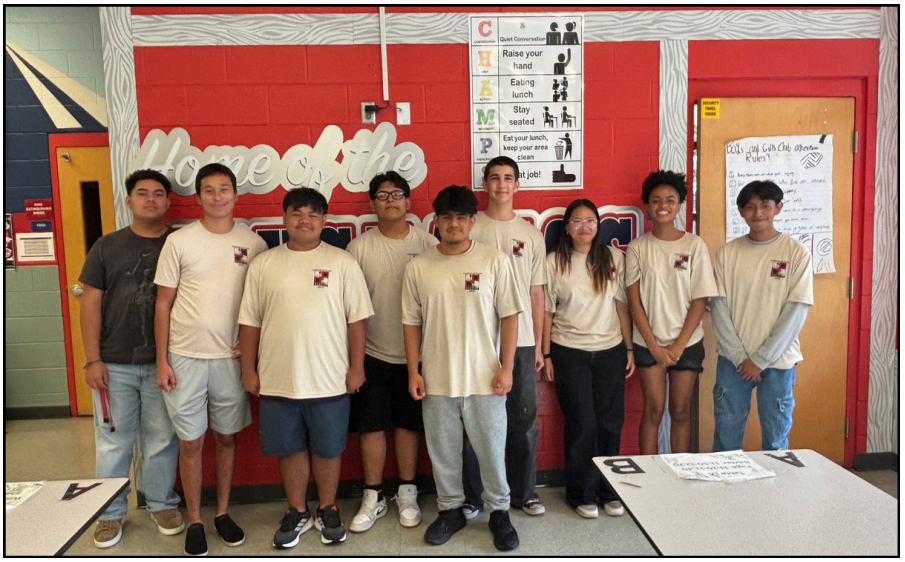
The newsletter features stories, photographs, competitions, events, and important updates that showcase the leadership, teamwork, citizenship, and service that are at the heart of Manatee High School JROTC. The ***Eye of the Storm*** captures the moments that help shape tomorrow's leaders.

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Elias Hernandez
Service Learning Officer

This school year, the Hurricane Battalion has continued its commitment to community service through the Big Buddy Project, led by Service-Learning Officer Cadet Elias Hernandez. Held every Monday and Wednesday at Manatee Elementary School, the program pairs JROTC cadets with younger students to provide academic support, mentorship, and encouragement.

The Big Buddy Project gives cadets the opportunity to put leadership into action by serving as positive role models and helping students develop both academically and personally. At the same time, elementary students benefit from the guidance and support of mentors who inspire confidence, responsibility, and learning. Through this ongoing partnership, the Battalion continues to demonstrate the JROTC values of service, leadership, and citizenship while making a lasting impact in the community.

HURRICANE BATTALION SERVICE LEARNING

BIG BUDDY REFLECTION

Command Team Update



C/LTC Emma Velazquez



C/CSM Alaina Christian

As we complete the first quarter of the 2026-27 school year, the Hurricane Battalion has already achieved tremendous success through the dedication, hard work, and teamwork of our cadets. From outstanding performances of our Raider, Rifle, and Color Guard teams to meaningful service-learning projects and battalion activities, our cadets continue to set a high standard of excellence.

As we move into the second quarter, we encourage every cadet to stay focused on academics, leadership development, and personal growth. There are many exciting opportunities ahead, and continued effort will ensure our Battalion remains successful.

We also ask all cadets to complete their respective LET Survey. Your feedback is important and helps us identify our strengths while improving the cadet experience.

Continue to work hard, lead by example, and represent the Hurricane Battalion with pride.
Enter to Learn, Leave to Lead!

LET Surveys

Hurricane Battalion Fundraiser



Alumni Spotlight: Jose Portillo



The Hurricane Battalion is proud to recognize one of our distinguished alumni, Jose Portillo, a 2023 graduate of Manatee High School who continues to embody the values of leadership, service, and excellence. During his final year in JROTC, Jose served as the Hurricane Battalion Commander, ranking first among more than 240 cadets and setting the standard for leadership throughout the program. He was also a key member of the Drill Team, Color Guard, and Florida State Champion Raider Team.

In recognition of his outstanding performance, Jose was awarded a prestigious Army ROTC National Scholarship and enrolled at the University of South Florida, where he is now in his senior year. Throughout his time at USF, Jose has continued to excel academically and as a cadet leader while preparing for a career as an Army officer. He is scheduled to graduate and commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army in May 2027. His current branch preferences are Field Artillery, Engineer, and Signal Corps.

Jose's achievements serve as an inspiration to current Hurricane Battalion cadets. His journey from Battalion Commander to future Army officer demonstrates what can be accomplished through dedication, hard work, and a commitment to serving others. We congratulate Jose on his success and look forward to following his Army career in the years ahead.

Hurricane Battalion Teams



Color Guard

Commander
C/MAJ Fernando Mercado



Rifle Team

Commander
C/MAJ Vannessa Burge



Our Color Guard has performed at numerous events this year. From Friday night football games to honoring fallen heroes during the community 9/11 ceremony, the Color Guard has executed every event with precision and professionalism. Through tireless dedication, these cadets embody duty, honor, and pride at every event.



Pictured here competing at Palmetto High School, the Hurricane Battalion Rifle Team opened its 2026-2027 season just weeks after tryouts concluded. The team's first match served as an important learning experience, helping cadets identify areas for growth while building the foundation for a successful season ahead.



Raider Team

Commander
C/CSM Alaina Christian

Teams:
Female Team: C/CSM Alaina Christian
Male Team: C/1SG Carter Nance





The Hurricane Raider Team has enjoyed an outstanding start to the 2026-2027 season, demonstrating dedication, teamwork, and resilience through months of demanding training. Preparation began during the summer and continued throughout the school year, helping cadets develop the strength, endurance, and teamwork needed for competition.

The season opened at the Braden River Raider Rumble, where the Female Raider Team earned 3rd Place Overall out of 14 teams, while the Male Raider Team finished 5th Place Overall out of 17 teams. Both teams then excelled at the SMA Invitational Raider Meet, earning 2nd Place Overall finishes.



Most recently, the Hurricane Battalion competed at the Manatee County Raider Meet, where the Female Raider Team earned 2nd Place Overall and the Male Raider Team earned 3rd Place Overall, continuing the team's string of successful performances.

With top finishes and trophies earned throughout the season, the team's focus now turns to Raider Nationals at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Cadets continue to train with determination as they prepare to compete against some of the nation's best Raider teams while proudly representing Manatee High School and the Hurricane Battalion on the national stage.

HURRICANE HIGHLIGHTS

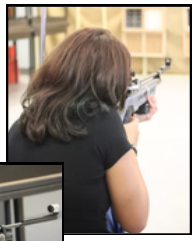






The Manatee High School JROTC Color Guard proudly presented our Nation's Colors at the Homecoming football game, the community 9/11 Memorial Ceremony, and the Manatee High Alumni Association Ceremony.







Rifle Team in Action.



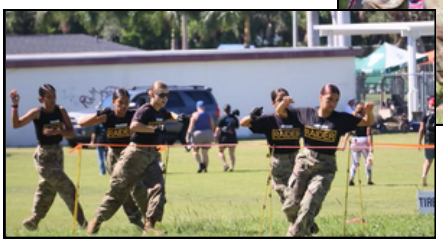


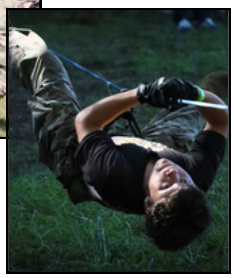


Raider Team in Action.



Cadets participate in the first Polo wear of the year.







Cadets participate in physical training each Friday.







Cadets participate in the curl-up event as part of the Cadet Challenge. The Cadet Challenge promotes a healthy lifestyle and the importance of fitness. The Hurricane Battalion goal is to achieve at least 5% improvement by the Spring Cadet Challenge in February 2027.

2026-2027 CHAIN OF COMMAND


Battalion Commander
C/LTC Velazquez, E.


Executive Officer
C/MAJ Mercado, F.

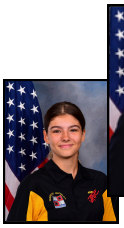

Command Sergeant Major
C/CSM Christian, A.

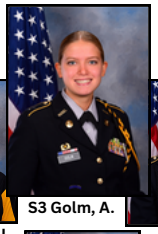

Operations Sergeant Major
C/SGM Shannon, E.

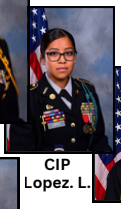

S1 Tasny, M.


AS1 Gubernat, M.


S2 Highers, A.


AS3 Busiere, L.


S3 Golm, A.


CIP
Lopez. L.


CIP
Kelly, T.


S4
McSweeney, T.

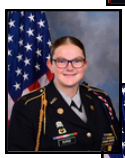

AS4 Romero, E.


S5 Martinez, V.


AS5 Vasquez, K.


S6 Pina, J.

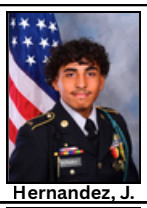
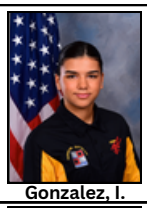
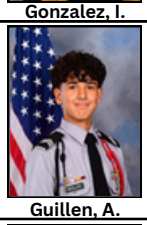
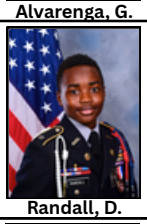
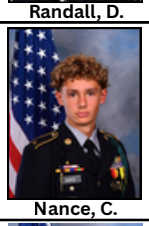

AS6 Burnette, P.


Protocol
Burge, V.


Sr. Staff McCormick, A.


SL
Hernandez, E.


SL
Greenwood, S.

	Commander	1SG	XO	PSG	PSG
Alpha Company	 Hernandez, J.	 Gonzalez, I.	 Velazquez, J.	 Jameson, D.	 Culhane, C.
Bravo Company	 Alvarenga, G.	 Guillen, A.	 Hernandez, S.	 Drao, C.	 Valladares, A.
Charlie Company	 Randall, D.	 Elken, B.	 Le Tran, T.	 Perez, C.	 Brush, H.
Delta Company	 Nance, C.	 Culhane, B.	 Ramirez, E.	 Harwood, J.	Rocha, J.
Echo Company	Hernandez, D.	Coronel, K.	Velazquez, E.	Sabir, N.	Highers, E.

CADETS OF THE MONTH, 1ST QTR, FALL 2026

Cadets of the Month AUGUST

LET 1



Christopher Eveland

LET 2



Isabel Gonzalez

LET 3



Teagan McSweeney

LET 4



Emma Velazquez

Cadets of the Month SEPTEMBER

LET 1



Paxton Lee

LET 2



Sorayma Hernandez

LET 3



Alaina Christian

LET 4



Fernando Mercado

COMPANY OF THE QUARTER, 1ST QTR, FALL 2026

MHS HURRICANE BATTALION

BRAVO COMPANY



COMPANY COMMANDER
C/1LT Genesis Alvarenga



FIRST SERGEANT
C/1SG Alexander Guillen



EXECUTIVE OFFICER
C/2LT Sorayma Hernandez

Bravo Company was selected as the Company of the Quarter for the 1st Quarter of AY 2026-27. This recognition reflects the outstanding motivation, performance, and professionalism demonstrated by its cadets.

Bravo Company's success is also a testament to the dedication and leadership of its company command team, whose commitment to excellence helped foster a positive and disciplined environment. Through hard work, teamwork, and a strong desire to succeed, Bravo Company consistently set the standard for the battalion and earned this well-deserved honor.

Congratulations to the cadets and leadership of Bravo Company on an outstanding first quarter. Keep up the great work as you continue to lead the way for the Hurricane Battalion!

LOOKING AHEAD - 2ND QUARTER, FALL 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 22-26 OCT: Raider Nationals
- 26 OCT: Annual Food Drive Begins
- 29 OCT: Manatee Elem. Trunk or Treat
- 1-20 NOV: JLAB level 1 Competition
- 5 NOV: County Rifle Meet
- 7 NOV: A5 Raider Challenge
- 11 NOV: Veterans Day (No School)
- 11 NOV: Veterans Day Parade
- 13 NOV: Annual Food Drive Ends
- 23-27 NOV: Thanksgiving Break
- *9 DEC: A5 Rifle Meet (Tentative)
- 12 DEC: State Raider Challenge
- 21 DEC: 5 JAN - Winter Break

Manatee County Veterans Day Parade

Please come out to support our Cadets and the veterans of our community during the annual Manatee County Veterans Day Parade.

11 NOV 2026

Drop off: 8:15 am
Lot behind Hungry Howie's
1705 8th Ave W
Palmetto, FL 34221

Pick up: 11 am
Sutton Park
(corner of 6th St W & 10th Ave W)
1036 6th St W
Palmetto, FL 34221

U.S. Army Cadet Command National Raider Competition

The Manatee High School Hurricane Battalion Raider team will be competing in the National Raider competition from 23-25 October 2026 at Fort Knox, KY. If you are planning to attend, please complete the Fort Knox installation access registration prior to arrival by scanning the QR code. Visit the National Raider Challenge website for additional information.

FT KNOX REGISTRATION

https://usarmyjrotc.army.mil/nationalraiderchallenge/



STAY CONNECTED

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@MANATEEHIGHJROTC

HURRICANE BATTALION WEBSITE

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