



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

From four a.m. wake-up calls to nail-biting defeats, this Rhode Island student leader is motivated by adversity

Image courtesy Jeremiah Martinez

CRANSTON, R.I. -- Sometimes the best things in life come when you least expect them to. For **Jeremiah Martinez**, what would become a pivotal part of his high school career began with the flip of a coin.

“I was talking with my friend about joining [the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC)] and couldn’t figure out if I wanted to do it or not,” Martinez said. “We flipped a coin. Heads I join, tails I don’t. It was heads.”

Now a rising senior at Cranston High School East, Martinez is looking forward to another exciting and challenging year with his team.

“I’m one of the captains of the team,” he said. **“I have leadership skills.”**

While the COVID-19 pandemic threw a curveball in Martinez’s freshman year, the teen quickly developed those leadership skills and rose the ranks in JROTC.



From four a.m. wake-up calls to narrowly missing a first-place victory in a regional drill competition, Martinez has learned **discipline, responsibility, and accountability.**

“It’s nerve-racking. I messed up badly, but it wasn’t too bad,” Martinez said of the competition. “We were able to take second place. If I hadn’t messed up, we could have taken first.”

The skills developed in part through the JROTC program have paid off throughout his education. Eager to learn and lead, Martinez has excelled in many hands-on, real-world relevant courses offered at Cranston East, including PC Repair and Network Systems,

Financial Literacy, and Music Production, a program made possible through RIDE’s ARTS Initiative.

This academic year, Martinez has several goals, including earning a first-place competition finish.

“I also want to pass my classes with at least honors,” he added. “Get my life prepared.”

Unlike the eighth-grade coin toss, Martinez’s future success won’t be determined by luck – but by his **hard work, dedication, and commitment to leadership** in Rhode Island.

Remember, **being present is essential for students to learn.** Cranston Public Schools students return August 31 (K, 1, 6, 9) and September 1 (all students). Wish students luck and join the conversation using **#Cool2BeinSchoolRI** and **#Back2SchoolRI.**



Jeremiah and classmates in Music Production.