

THE BRIEFING

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Supreme School Spirit

High school football is a huge deal in many Texas towns. There have been movies and TV shows based off of the excitement and drama surrounding a season of the great American pastime. For Chandler Patterson, 15, the entire concept gets his heart pumping. And while he plans to be on the field for each game, people probably won't recognize him.

Chandler was recently selected to be his high school's mascot, the Birdville Hawk, and received a grant from Our Military Kids to do so. After signing up and completing the tryout, Chandler learned he will represent the school at every athletic event – though sharing the duties with another classmate. That includes all of the football games, along with basketball, baseball, soccer, and others. He attends all pep rallies and acts as the high school's ambassador to local elementary schools.

While serving as a mascot may not be the most typical activity for a high school student, it made total sense to Chandler and his family.

"His dad was a mascot in high school, so it's something we've always talked about," said Chandler's mother, Tomi Cheeks. "Chandler is very artistic and creative just like his dad – he is an amazing artist and plays the guitar, too. He loves sports, but he's more bent towards the arts."

His father, First Lieutenant Jacob Patterson, is serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom with the Army National Guard. He's scheduled to come home soon for leave, and Chandler is

excited to catch up with his dad about his mascot endeavor.

"Chandler's dad is thrilled that they can share this since they've both gotten to be part of a unique tradition. And Chandler is definitely ready for him to come home," said Tomi.

The summer will be mostly relaxed for Chandler, but he will attend camp in Florida with his school's cheerleaders to learn more about how to be the best mascot possible by using props and creating skits to music, among other things. His grant will pay for this experience and prepare him for the year ahead.

"It's freed him up and let him focus on the fun parts of high school and not worry about where the money is going to come from," said Tomi. "It's a blessing to know there are people who remember these kids and try to make their lives easier while their parents are gone – it gives us a huge sense of pride for the sacrifices Jacob is making for all of us."



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