

Making Life Better

Military Child Advocates for International Humanitarian Law on a Global Stage

(NAPS)—Rachel Oh sat in an office at a military hospital, shifting in her seat and clicking the pen an American Red Cross representative had just given her. It was a day of much anticipation but at that moment, all she felt was nerves.

“I initially joined the Red Cross because I was interested in volunteering at the hospital where my mom worked,” said Oh. “It was straight out of COVID, and I was looking for something productive to do.”

The Red Cross, thanks to its Congressional Charter, which authorizes the organization to provide emergency communication services to deployed service members around the world, is granted unique access to U.S. military installations, military hospitals and veteran care facilities.

Oh lives in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Her mother is a doctor in the oncology department at the largest U.S. military hospital outside of the continental U.S.

“I was always interested in the hospital where my mom worked and wanted to be closer to her.”

But she was too young at the time, so they introduced her to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Youth Action Campaign (YAC) instead.

YAC is an educational outreach campaign that promotes awareness of and commitment to humanitarian principles in times of war. Outreach like this holds special significance to children of active-duty military parents like Oh, who describes the military as being a part of her life for as long as she can remember.

She takes advantage of her proximity to military decision makers by setting up booths at the mall on base and wheeling a snack cart through the hallways of the hospital. She uses these interactions as a chance to raise awareness of this important work.

“I want to be someone that anyone can come up to and ask about International Humanitarian Law and how they could help,” she explained.

Oh quickly rose from volunteering on weekends to becoming President of the Red Cross club at her school and even earned an invitation to the Youth Action Campaign Summit at the American Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington D.C. last year. She impressed national staff as a passionate public speaker and was asked to attend a series of international meetings in Geneva, Switzerland as a youth representative.

“Before attending the conference, I never expected anyone to take my words seriously,” she said. “However, the emphasis on youth and undivided



Rachel Oh briefs her military youth peers on the importance of international humanitarian law.



Rachel Oh smiles with other Red Cross leaders from around the world in Geneva, Switzerland.

attention I received during the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Statutory Meetings] changed my viewpoint. I was extremely shocked about how much they cared for youth and their hope for our generation to uplift IHL.”

The conference reaffirmed Oh’s belief in the power of young people and their ability to create positive change using new technologies and social media. Now, a high school senior with graduation on the horizon, she is once again setting her sights on Washington D.C.

“My involvement in the Red Cross made me more motivated to study for my dream career,” Oh said. “I want to be a doctor in conflict zones. My experience in international humanitarian law and meeting injured Ukrainian soldiers and war veterans has inspired me to go to those zones and contribute to their community by treating injured soldiers and innocent civilians.”

Thus far, she’s received acceptance letters from four colleges and expects many more. The Red Cross is thrilled to celebrate Rachel Oh and the dedication and determination young leaders like her possess during the Month of the Military Child in April and beyond.

Anyone interested in promoting international humanitarian law can visit redcross.org/ihl to view upcoming events and register as a volunteer.