**Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it. (650 words)**

I remember being on the phone with my vice, rereading the invitations for the nth time while he revised the rundown of the inauguration in the background. Nothing could have prepared me for the stress of organizing my own inauguration as president of the Leo Club.

The previous president was elected during the peak of the pandemic, at a point where no one had really adjusted to online life yet. So he never had his inauguration, and unfortunately, this meant he could not help me with mine. This was the first event I held as president, and at my school, the inauguration was a big deal. There were traditions I had to follow, strangers I had to invite, a team I suddenly had to get to know, and only two weeks to prepare. An impending sense of doom loomed over me as I asked myself if I did the right thing accepting the position.

At the peak of my anxiety, a memory of my younger self resurfaced: little me in the audience, watching intently as my senior was inaugurated as president. My heart had enough admiration to go into cardiac arrest. With that came a sense of longing, wanting so badly to be like them one day, and this was my opportunity. An opportunity I refused to give up on.

I clearly recall the first meeting I ever held with my team—the deafening silence every time I asked a question, the occasional nod of “I want this meeting to end.” I usually had a knack for becoming quick friends with strangers. Getting to know the team online was a whole different ball game that had me Googling “ ice breakers” and “ways to get your team to bond” for over 3 hours.

Determined to at least show a sense of capability, I awkwardly introduced myself to seniors who were past presidents and asked them for any old document or advice that would help me organize this event. Then to ask neighboring clubs for the contacts of the higher ups who were mandatory witnesses for the inauguration, was especially difficult since the people in these specific positions would change every year. Once we had everyone on the list, it was time to send the invitations, something that filled my secretary with so much anxiety that I had to tell her that it would be okay, even though I was scared beyond belief myself. The only silver lining would be the late night meetings we had, altering the old run downs so that it’d fit an online setting, letting out our frustration about unanswered emails and laughing it out for hours on end. The group had become a team.

The actual inauguration was far from ideal. Having to look calm and collected as the event went on, but replying to texts and emergency calls behind the scenes was an experience I hope to never repeat. But most of the things that happened were out of our control, things we’d never expect.

 Putting up a brave front and having to be a pillar that guided others when I was constantly doubting my every decision, made me realize I was more capable and adaptive than I thought. Driven by the need to prove myself as a leader, working through immense fear and anxiety, I was able to communicate to people of different ages and backgrounds, working under stressful conditions before and during the event, and adjust so that the event ran as smoothly as possible. The inauguration ignited a new spark of confidence within me.

The confidence wasn’t for nothing, at the end of my presidency, the District Governor awarded us an “Outstanding Service Award”, the first one my school had received in years. We were in awe. The whole time we thought we were lacking and behind, massive underachievers compared to other clubs in the district, yet there it stood, small but proud, a physical manifestation of a year of struggles and victories.