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## Hardworking student's story is inspirational

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The novelist Horatio Alger died more than a century ago, but his spirit is alive and well and living in Vineland.

Alger was the hugely popular 19th century writer who specialized in "rags to riches" stories about poor boys who rose to success through their own hard work and determination.

Enter Vineland High School senior Franklin Marsh. His story was on the front page of The Daily Journal Tuesday, and it was as inspiring as those Horatio Alger stories of long ago. But the inspiration in this case is not just from this young man, but also from those who have helped guide him on the right path.

Marsh has won a four-year full scholarship worth \$103,000 to Temple University under the Army's Reserve Officers' Training Corps program. He will come out of the program in four years with his bachelor's degree and a commission as a second lieutenant.

Lots of kids earn scholarships, but the circumstances here are special. Marsh is from a broken family and has at times been homeless. Last August, he and his younger brother were placed in foster care with Maribelle and Hiram Rodriguez. But Marsh credits his mother for encouraging him to stay positive, to behave and to do well in school.

But there were other positive influences, too. Marsh entered Vineland's new Junior ROTC program -- "the energy shot that helped me get to where I am now," he calls it. And while he thought about enlisting after he graduates this month, his JROTC commander, retired Army Maj. Robert Simpson, and his guidance counselor, Marlene Girard, urged him to pursue college and an ROTC scholarship.

Franklin Marsh's story could have gone wrong in any number of ways. Too many young people with his background end up with little education, little motivation and no prospects.

What made the difference in this case? Franklin Marsh's character, certainly. But also the contributions of his mother, his foster parents and his school advisers.

We congratulate Franklin Marsh and all those who have given him support. Horatio Alger would have been proud of this story line. So should the people of Vineland.