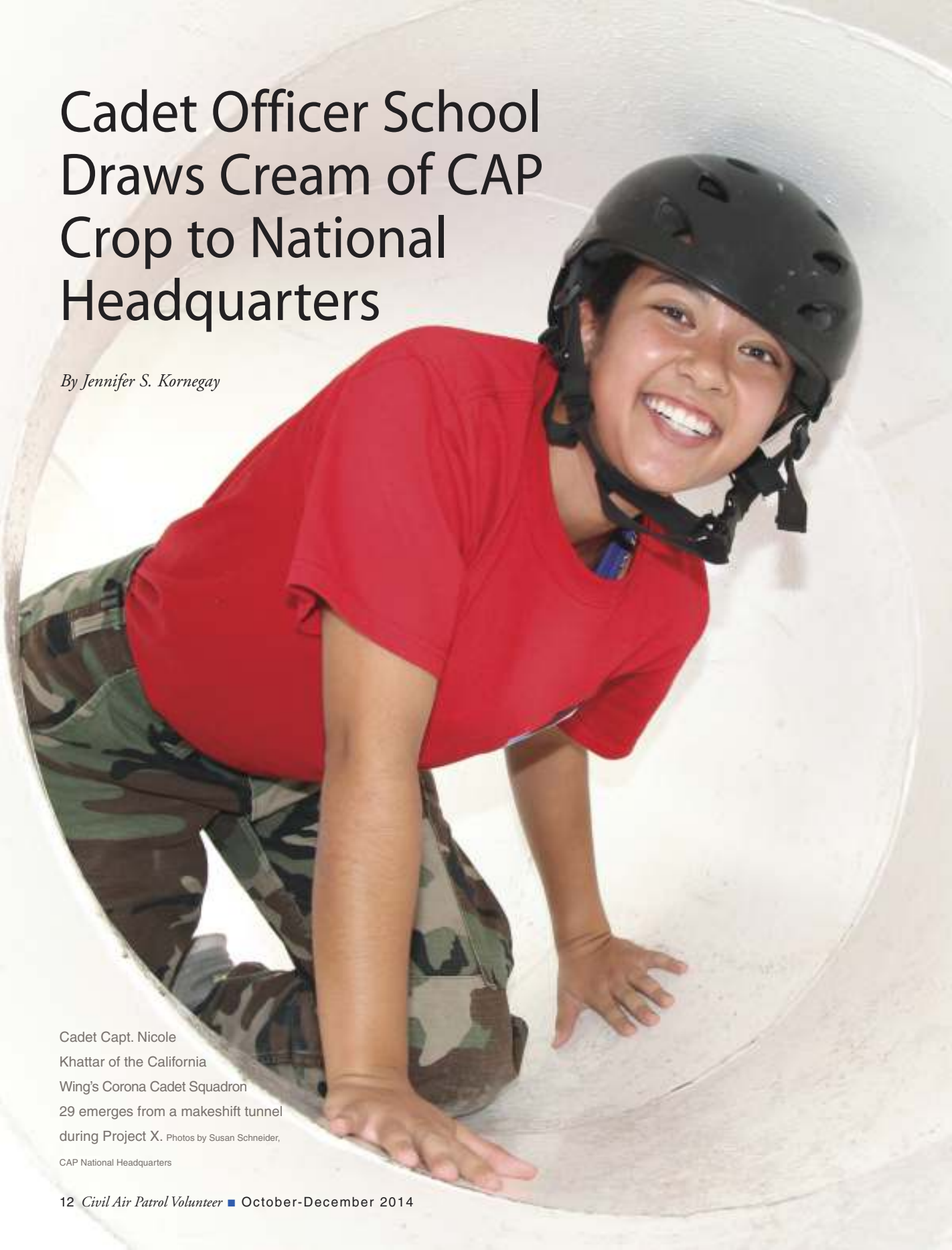


Cadet Officer School Draws Cream of CAP Crop to National Headquarters

By Jennifer S. Kornegay



Cadet Capt. Nicole
Khattar of the California
Wing's Corona Cadet Squadron
29 emerges from a makeshift tunnel
during Project X. Photos by Susan Schneider,

CAP National Headquarters



A lot of kids wrap up their summers soaking up sun at the beach, playing basketball or just hanging out with friends. For 121 Civil Air Patrol cadets, the period before the start of school couldn't have been more different: Over the course of 10 days, they completed 500 pages of reading, delivered three speeches and drafted six talking papers as part of their studies on leadership at Cadet Officer School.

“I am continually impressed with the caliber of these young leaders. While their peers are playing this summer, they are here, in the Alabama heat, working really hard to better their leadership skills and talents,” said Lt. Col. Rajesh Kothari, who was completing his third year as activity director of the school, held annually at National Headquarters at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

“And they want to be here,” he said.

In fact, they strive to make it to COS. As one of the top professional development opportunities for CAP cadets, COS trains the leaders of tomorrow, teaching them lessons and skills they take home and use as they prepare for college and their careers.

Only the top 15 percent of CAP cadets get the chance to participate in COS. This year, 121 from 35 wings made the cut.

“COS is teaching us all to develop critical thought processes,” said Cadet 1st Lt. Harris Kruse Jr. of the Missouri Wing’s Platte Valley Composite Squadron. “And I’ve improved my communication and teamwork skills too.”

One of the final COS programs in the 10-day experience required the cadets, divided into 10 flights, to choose one of 15 aerospace pioneers, then give a speech on their choice to their fellow flight members about their leadership contributions and impact on aerospace. “The goal was to hone their communication capabilities while also helping them better understand each subject’s unique leadership style,” Kothari said.

“We don’t want just a bio on these guys,” he said. “We want the cadets to really digest the information and then be able to effectively share that with others.”

Cadet Maj. Andrew Teubl, a member of the New York Wing’s Vanguard Composite Squadron, delivered a speech on U.S. Air Force Gen. Haywood Hansell, a chief architect of the Army Air Forces’ daylight strategic bombing program during World War II. Teubl began with some background, then outlined the general’s successes and failures and pointed out which aspects of his personality and leadership style influenced both.

As he spoke, his fellow cadets listened intently. When the speeches were completed, they and two COS instructors offered feedback and

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COS participants work to solve a Project X challenge. They are, back row from left, Cadet Capts. Joe Korona and Nathaniel Tartter, Cadet 2nd Lt. Julie Einbinder, Cadet 1st Lt. Adam Nelson and Cadet Capt. Stephon Tonko. In front is Cadet Capt. Ryan Marsh.

constructive criticism, all designed to enhance their communication skills.

The speech sessions allowed the cadets to try out some of the tools and techniques they learned at COS.

Patterned after Air Force Squadron Officer College, COS mixes lectures, seminars and hands-on training.

Kruse's favorite activity, Project X, was one of the hands-on segments. It pushed the cadets to work together to solve some interesting problems that involved crossing bridges, scaling walls and other tasks that tested

their limits.

The challenges look almost insurmountable at first, but by using communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork, the cadets can — and do — overcome the obstacles.

Cadet Capt. Nicole Khattar, a member of the California Wing's Corona Cadet Squadron 29, said she got the most from the Compound, another leadership exercise.

“It lets us see firsthand what works and what doesn't and how to deal with that and how to deal with different personalities,” Khattar said. “We'll all need that in the real world.”

Cadet 1st Lt. Kiana Ward of the Washington Wing's Overlake Composite Squadron echoed Khattar.

“I came to COS to interact with my fellow cadets,”

Ward said. "I'm leaving with a deeper knowledge of leadership and new ideas about what kinds of leadership really work."

Kothari stressed one other important component of COS: "These cadets get to learn, up close and personal, about the Air Force. Doing this on base and with Air Force officers involved is really special."

Outside the classroom, a highlight of the course was an hourlong program featuring Col. Mary Feik of the Maryland Wing, the aviation legend who's one of CAP's most storied members. Feik answered questions from Lt. Col. Robert Smith of the North Carolina Wing on stage in front of a packed audience of cadets in Husband Auditorium at Maxwell's Squadron Officer College.

Feik reminisced about her long career dating back to World War II as an aviation engineer, master mechanic, pilot, aircraft maintenance instructor, author of maintenance instruction manuals, trainer designer and National Air and Space Museum restorer of vintage aircraft. Afterward, she fielded questions about her experiences and her views on the opportunities CAP offers its members.

The visit was the first to National Headquarters for Feik, a lifetime CAP member who has been inducted into the Women in Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame, has been honored by NASA as one of the 47 most significant women in aerospace and has received the Order of Merit from the World Aerospace Education Organization. ▲



Col. Mary Feik of the Maryland Wing, one of America's true aviation legends, speaks to a full auditorium of enrapt Cadet Officer School participants during her first visit to CAP National Headquarters.

We salute the U.A.P.!



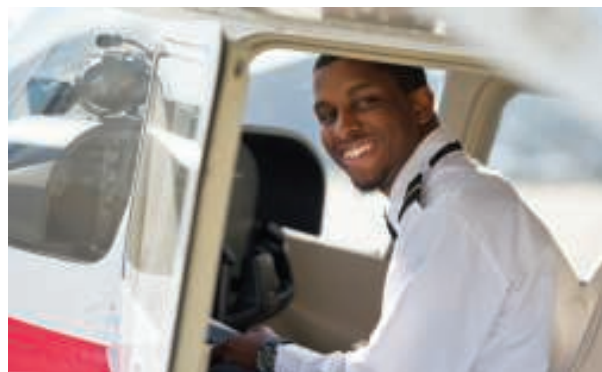
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