Cadets Soar At Summer Activities

National Cadet Competition, International Air Cadet Exchange and Blue Beret encampment never disappoint

By Jennifer S. Kornegay

When summer rolls around each year, hundreds of Civil Air Patrol cadets can be found all over the country — and the world — participating in more than 30 national cadet activities, all of which offer these young men and women amazing opportunities to learn new skills and hone those they already have. Three of the activities — National Cadet Competition, National Blue Beret and International Air Cadet Exchange — are always especially popular, and for good reason. These programs take hands-on learning to a whole new level.

National Cadet Competition

It's a given that CAP cadets are some of the best and brightest of their generation. At NCC — which brought 138 highly skilled cadets from across the nation to Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, for color guard and drill team competitions — these standouts bond together and push themselves even further, said NCC Director Lt. Col. Steve Piehl.

NCC is an activity that is centered on being the best cadet one can be. It provides a framework of competition built on the CAP cadet program that allows cadets to demonstrate their aptitude with respect to academics, physical fitness and teamwork. In addition to color guard and drill team



Photo by Maj. Paul Creed III, Ohio Wing

Cadets from the Great Lakes Region Drill Team stand at attention during in-ranks inspection at NCC.



Photo by Maj. Paul Creed III, Ohio Wing

Members of the Southeast Region Drill Team from Tennessee hit the track in the mile run competition.

performances, a written exam and panel quiz test creativity and knowledge of aerospace-related topics, while physical fitness challenges involve volleyball and a one-mile run.

Teamwork is a key aspect of the competition. "Through NCC, the teams bond together — just like any kind of sporting team," said Piehl.

"I learned teamwork with my fellow cadets, and not only within my own team but with others from around the nation," said Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Paul Taylor, 16, of the Rhode Island Wing's West Bay Composite Squadron in Coventry. "We all worked together to help each other out."

Piehl stressed the importance of these relationships. "As with any national-level activity, NCC introduces participants to other participants from different areas of the country," he said. "This exposure to the diversity of the CAP family is valuable."

The NCC experience also shapes the cadets as individuals. "NCC is really about learning how to deal with others, manage stress, manage expectations and lead a group of people toward a goal," Piehl said.

New this year was the NCC Outreach Program, designed to give CAP members not participating in NCC the chance to observe the competition. "It allowed them to watch and learn from the teams that made it that far," Piehl said.

About 35 members participated in the Outreach Program, and what they witnessed was the result of serious dedication. Cadet 2nd Lt. Nathaniel Forrider, 16, of the Youngstown ARS Composite Squadron in Vienna, Ohio, for example, practiced for six months in order to perform to the best of his ability.

"I'm gaining leadership skills and confidence," Forrider said of the experience.

Everything NCC cadets learn will benefit them in the future, said Piehl.

"I think the main reason I am so involved in NCC is because of the life lessons I learned from being on a drill team as a cadet," he said. "I credit it with shaping my personality, interpersonal skills and leadership style. These are all characteristics that help me be successful in my professional work life as well as in CAP."



Photo courtesy of United Kingdom Conducting Officer, Squadron Leader (U.K. equivalent; Maj.) Claire Sarsfield

While at the National Memorial Arboretum, the United Kingdom's year-round Centre of Remembrance, CAP's IACE delegation was made aware of a special 9/11 Memorial nearby. They made it their mission to find it and pay their respects. Gathered at the memorial, from left, are Cadet Lt. Cols. Jacque Taylor of the Arizona Wing and Ross Kohler of the Illinois Wing, Maj. Deborah Salter Kawaguchi of the Washington Wing and Cadet Majs. Zack Lynch of the California Wing and Kendra Lauer of the South Dakota Wing.

International Air Cadet Exchange

Fostering an exchange of understanding and information and encouraging international cooperation is what IACE is all about. By building on common ground — a mutual interest in flying — the exchange brings



Photo by Maj. Jonathan Swinarski, Texas Wing

Cadet Col. John Brennan of the Maryland Wing navigates a ropes course at the German Federal Defense Force (Bundeswehr) survival training camp as part of the 2012 International Air Cadet Exchange.

youth from across the globe together to bridge the gaps between countries and cultures.

Since 1948 the IACE Association, a group of 19 air cadet organizations around the world, has included CAP cadets in the program.

This year, 54 CAP cadets went abroad while the United States hosted 68 air cadets from Australia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Turkey and the United Kingdom. It was the first year a cadet from the Czech Republic has participated.

Lt. Col. Bev Scoggins, director of plans and programs for CAP's Pacific Region, is also director of IACE. She outlined the program's most valuable takeaway: "This exchange encourages our cadets and escorts to view life outside our own country and to see just how similar we all are," Scoggins said. "Languages may differ, but we all have the bond of aerospace and aviation. A big thrill for many is the chance to live with a host family and see the everyday lives of those in their host countries."

Cadet Lt. Col. Alan Leach of the Capital City Composite Squadron in Shermans Dale, Pa., spent his IACE visit in the United Kingdom. The 19-year-old summed up his experience with one word: "invaluable."

"I gained a better understanding of how the British cadet program (Air Training Corps) operates and how it and CAP are different," Leach said. "One of the most interesting things I learned was their officers are actually commissioned by her majesty, the queen. That means, if needed, they could be activated as officers in the Royal Air Force."

He also made some new friends who helped him debunk a few British stereotypes. "The friendships that have been created over the past 2½ weeks will last a lifetime, and who knows, I may just have met the future leaders of several nations and added them as friends on Facebook! And I discovered that the British don't actually use the words 'bloody,' 'jolly good' or 'simply smashing' on a regular basis."

Cadet Maj. Jacob Napp, 19, of Dubuque Composite Squadron in Iowa also traveled to the UK. "I learned the world is a lot larger than I thought," he said. "So many things I thought would be different in other cultures were the same as in the U.S., and things I thought would be the same, were different," Napp said.

Photo by Susan Schneider, CAP National Headquarters



Cadet Capt. Joseph Crockett of the Kansas Wing calls out tail numbers as planes take off during the Blue Beret encampment in Oshkosh, Wis.

"The best part of the trip was getting to know people from all over the world," he said. "They are such amazing people, and it's easy to forget we are from such diverse cultures when we can connect so easily."

Ines Weber, 18, traveled from Germany to spend time in New Hampshire during IACE. "I gained many new friends and new knowledge and was able to have open discussions with people from many different cultural backgrounds," she said.

Thanks to IACE, Weber too was able to see past a misperception. "Military ways of doing things are not necessarily connected to wars," she said. "They are good to train discipline and encourage fellowship among young people at CAP," she said.

Her countrywoman Alexandra Guderly, 19, also found CAP's connection to the U.S. Air Force intriguing, since Germany's air cadet program is completely civilian in all aspects.

"We were in summer encampment in Norwich, and it was very interesting to see the discipline and all of the military stuff," Guderly said. "This will always stay in my mind, because it was very impressive."

Weber believes she gave as much as she got. "I hope I left a good impression about Europe and new knowledge and new perspectives in the United States," she said.

National Blue Beret

When asked why he took time out of his summer vacation to participate in National Blue Beret, Cadet 1st Lt. Patrick Conte of the New York Wing's Niagara Falls Composite Squadron answered succinctly: "To heighten my leadership, emergency services and teamwork skills in a way I could not do anywhere else."

Conte was one of 142 cadets and 45 officers who attended NBB this year. This annual activity gives cadets some amazing opportunities and experiences, thanks to an ongoing partnership with Experimental Aircraft Association that allows CAP to host NBB during the annual EAA fly-in, AirVenture, in Oshkosh, Wis.

The cadets and officers who participate in NBB work at one of the world's largest, most prestigious air shows, which draws more than 500,000 people each year and includes more than 10,000 aircraft. Other exciting aspects this year included the opportunity to meet Dick Cole, one of two Doolittle raiders from World War II still living, as well as two Tuskegee Airmen.

Cadets really get in on the action at NBB and are an important part of the event staff, helping out in an array of areas, including working the flight line and the exhibits.

NBB's director, Lt. Col. James Peace of the Texas Wing's East Houston Cadet Squadron, has been a CAP member for 20 years; he first fell in love with NBB when he participated as a cadet in 1991. "AirVenture is the pinnacle of aviation," Peace said, "and NBB is such a great event. We actually contribute to the show and to the EAA's program while also exposing our members, especially the cadets, to all this amazing event has to offer and to teach.

"Blue Beret allows cadets to sharpen emergency services and disaster relief abilities as well as their leadership skills, and they get to see state-of-the-art, advanced aircraft as well as vintage military warbirds," he said. "They get to be right next to

these things and talk to those who fly them, those who maintain them. It's just so much better than reading about it in a textbook.

"Plus they have fun. They enjoy it, and the enjoyment is equally important," he said.

Cadet 2nd Lt. Jonathon Souther, 20, of Cooper City Cadet Squadron in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., enjoyed the camaraderie and sense of purpose he found at NBB. "I like the atmosphere. Everyone is totally committed to the task at hand," Souther said.

Cadet 2nd Lt. Daniel Rauch, age 16, of the California Wing's Santa Barbara Composite Squadron 131 was passionate about his favorite part of Blue Beret: "I loved working the busy flight line!" ▲



Photo by Susan Schneider, CAP National Headquarters

Other Blue Beret cadets surround Rhode Island Wing Cadet Lt. Col. Olivia Despirito to help her put on her beret during the encampment's graduation ceremony.

Blue Beret Honor Flight a thrill for cadets, vets



Maj. Chris Klein of CAP's Great Lakes Region escorts his father, retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Wayne Klein II, through two rows of saluting CAP cadets at National Blue Beret. The Kleins were headed to an airplane for an Honor Flight to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Susan Schneider, CAP National Headquarters

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Cadets participating in this year's NBB activity got a special treat — the chance to play a role in an Honor Flight. The Honor Flight Network reaches across America; its mission is to transport America's veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit memorials honoring their service and sacrifice.

CAP's national logistics officer, Maj. Chris Klein of the Great Lakes Region Headquarters staff, was accompanying his 89-year-old father, retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Wayne Klein II, on his first visit to the National World War II Memorial and was pleasantly surprised to see NBB cadets providing an honor guard when the Honor Flight left and then again when it landed back in Oshkosh.

"I was not aware they would be doing that," Klein said. "I know how busy the NBB schedule is and how many responsibilities the cadets have, so I was really pleased and honored they took the time to be involved."

The other veterans and their escorts were equally pleased — and also curious, Klein said. "They loved it, but they also had a lot of questions," he said. "Many of the cadets had patches on their uniforms from their home states, and the vets wanted to know more about CAP.

"It gave me a great opportunity to explain what CAP is and how it benefits cadets," said Klein, who knows firsthand what CAP can mean to young people. His daughter, Maj. Heidi Klein of the Wisconsin Wing's Southwest Group, received the organization's top cadet honor, the Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award, in 2008.

"NBB is honored to provide assistance to our country's greatest generation," said Lt. Col. James Peace, the activity's director. "The EAA and American Airlines should be commended for giving these heroes the opportunity to visit sites dedicated to their service." ▲