# The Cadet

U.S. Army Cadet Command's quarterly magazine Spring 2011 Vol. II Issue I

## In the limelight

*Cadet Command spotlights ROTC at U.S. Army All-American Bowl*

Cadet Command news online at http://CadetCommand.ArmyLive.DoDLive.mil

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While there was plenty of action on the turf at this year's 11th annual U.S. Army All-American Bowl, much of the activity occurred off the field in the week leading up to kickoff. Read all about U.S. Army Cadet Command's role in the game on pages six through 10. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

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*On the cover:* Clockwise from top left: ROTC Cadet Mirdalys Herrera sings the national anthem before kickoff of the U.S. Army All-American Bowl. | A player for the All-American West team runs the football. | Veronica Perez, left, and Jamie Carpenter take the oath of office. | Army banners line the causeway to the Alamodome. *Photos by Forrest Berkshire*

The Cadet

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# True leaders are made, not born

*Resilience, confidence are important attributes*

Cadet Command faced 2011 head-on by welcoming 737 newly commissioned lieutenants into the Army family. What a remarkable, Army Strong, start to the new year.

Speaking of Army strength, this year's U.S. Army All-American Bowl was a raging success. The Army dominated downtown San Antonio and the Alamo, accommodating hundreds of parents, coaches, educators, civic leaders and the nation's top high school senior football players and band musicians. It is our hope that through our combined efforts, these top scholar-athlete-leaders will become part of the next generation of America's finest leaders in our great Army.

Today's officers continue to embrace the Warrior Ethos imbued with the Army values. They are resilient leaders who can integrate combined arms, integrate with host nation forces and be able to handle the full complexity of 21st century warfare in this highly competitive joint expeditionary environment. They are expertly trained, adaptive and confident. They are also culturally astute leaders and ambassadors, representing the United States throughout the world.

It is true that leaders are made, not born. Therefore, Cadets, learn to value diversity and master the secret of resilience as you manage a full spectrum of challenges in your personal and professional lives. These skills will prove useful in your Army career as you handle full-spectrum operations in this era of persistent conflict. You must be creative and critical thinkers, be confident and competent communicators, and you must be capable of operating with a comprehensive approach to meet emerging challenges. These critical attributes enable leaders to contend with offensive, defensive and stability operations simultaneously.

This command has a long and distinguished history of developing the next great generation of Army leaders. The quality of second lieutenants commissioned through ROTC is unparalleled. Deployed senior leaders are giving ROTC lieutenants high marks across the board. These young officers are reaching their units with the basic military skill sets and the branch skills needed. More importantly, they are of good character and are physically and mentally fit.

As we strive to develop resilient Soldiers and leaders, there is unfortunately a continued rise in Soldier suicides. This is unacceptable. One suicide is too many, and each represents a tragic and avoidable loss to families, to our great Army and nation. Suicide affects us all, and preventing suicide is an all-hands effort all the time. It is critical that we take the time to know our fellow Soldiers and Cadets and take action whenever we notice something is not quite right.

Nearly everything in life requires teamwork. Asking for help when you need it, and providing support when others are in need, makes you a good team player and is a sign of strength. The Army and ROTC are unique in that it is truly a family. There is always someone there to listen and to help, whether it is your battle buddy, fellow Cadets, cadre members or other leadership.

Do not hesitate to seek help when needed or to reach out to behavioral health specialists or other resources available to you on campus. If you need help – ask; if you sense someone needs help – offer.

As we charge onward into the commissioning season, we expect the best from each one of you as you continue to develop as leaders of character and excellence. As you drive on, train hard, be the best you can be, stay safe and remember: a leader's training never ends.

Train to lead!

**Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald**
***Commanding General***
***U.S. Army Cadet Command***

## In tribute to King legacy

**Carrie McGuire, 16, a member of the Cheyenne High School Army Junior ROTC, leads a group with an American flag during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade in downtown Las Vegas Jan. 17.** *Photo by Steve Marcus, Las Vegas Sun*

## Project PASS modeled after Junior ROTC

The Junior ROTC curriculum that has benefitted countless students over the years by instilling structure, discipline, critical and creative thinking, leadership and success skills will become the foundation for a similar program at some of the country's middle schools.

A national kickoff of Partnership for All Student Success, known as Project PASS, is scheduled for March 11 in Hardin County, Ky. Other middle schools that will be part of the pilot program are in Christian County, Ky.; Garden City, Kan.; Gwinnett County, Ga.; and Miami.

Project PASS is a partnership between the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the U.S. Army and the states, school districts, schools and communities that will host the program. PASS encompasses JROTC units in high schools and Junior Leadership Corps (JLC) programs in feeder middle schools.

PASS aims to assist students in their development to becoming responsible and productive citizens by reaching them as early as the seventh grade, considered by educators to be a pivotal point in their lives where such a program can make a life-changing difference. The effort's goals are to increase student engagement and academic achievement, improve their overall well-being, decrease the dropout rate, create a college-going culture and sense of community, improve students' critical-thinking skills and sense of citizenship and increase parental and community engagement.

PASS is an umbrella for JROTC and JLC programs in the pilot districts, affording students access to education programs offered by the Army and NASBE that foster motivation to encourage them to stay in school and position themselves to graduate and succeed afterward. In addition, they can visit a free website called March2Success that is designed to improve performance on math, science and English tests and the ACT and SAT, and an online test that helps assess and explore potential careers.

Students can join JLC as part of PASS in seventh grade and, if they choose to, can transition into JROTC through their high school careers.

**Correction:** The University of Marquette captured the female division of 3rd Brigade's Ranger Challenge competition at Fort McCoy, Wis. Results in the December edition were incorrectly reported.

## ROTC gaining fans

U.S. Army Cadet Command's Facebook page hit a major milestone in January as it topped 20,000 fans.

By Jan. 31, the official Army ROTC Facebook page had 22,966 fans, making it the eighth most popular Facebook site in the Army. If you're not already, you can become a fan at www.facebook.com/CadetCommand.

## Hometown News program goes paperless

One of the key ways to promote success stories within Cadet Command is through the Hometown News Release Program.

For decades, the program has received information for write-ups via papers faxed or sent in by mail to its San Antonio office, including several thousand from Cadet Command alone last year.

A continued lack of funding has left it short on personnel to key in the information – just 39 people log more than 500,000 individual news releases annually, so the center is now only taking DD Form 2266s electronically. Submission of forms is now Web-based and is required to be submitted online through https://hnforms.dmasa.dma.mil/lfserver/usacadetcmd.

Cadet Command's Public Affairs Office, the clearinghouse for hometown news forms, is no longer accepting paper submissions. To continue the use of this vital public affairs program, the online link takes users to an automated form that can be used for promoting enrollment, scholarship awards, Leader Development and Assessment Course and Leader's Training Course attendance, airborne and air assault school attendance, George C. Marshall Award selection and commissioning.

The online form includes directions. There are nine pre-loaded events associated with the form. Each has its own summary, which will fill the summary block on the form automatically after one of the nine events is selected from a drop-down box. There is one stock story associated with each event on file at the Joint Hometown News Service, which will distribute write-ups to local media.

Questions about the process should be directed to Jeremy O'Bryan at Joint Base Lewis-McChord at (253) 966-8405, or by e-mail at jeremy.obryan@usacc.army.mil.





## Fort Lauderdale native voted into 2011 Hall of Fame class

*6th Brigade*

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. – A Junior ROTC instructor who has made his mark teaching athletes and Cadets has been inducted into the Florida Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Retired Maj. Thomas E. "Troop" Johnson, the senior Army instructor at Palm Garden's W.T. Dwyer High School and a 1984 graduate of Dillard High School in Fort Lauderdale, was enshrined at the Daytona Beach Hilton Oceanfront Resort.

USA Track & Field also named Johnson as the assistant coach of the 2011 USA World Championship Team to compete in August in Daegu, Korea.

Johnson is a former track and field athlete, All-American and decorated veteran of the U.S. Army. At Dillard High School, he was a member of the state champion 4x400-meter relay team. He also set a world record in the 500-meter dash while attending Florida State University, and he was ranked as high as No. 2 in the world in the 800-meter dash while competing for the U.S. Army's World Class Athletes program in 1988.

In addition to being Dwyer's JROTC instructor, Johnson is also the assistant coach of the boys and girls track team.

"Thomas represents all that is special about track and field: a spirit of determination, dedication and a genuine love for the sport that we all work so hard to promote around the world," said Ocky Clark, former American record-holder in the 1,000 meters and 1997 Hall of Fame inductee.

Johnson retired from the Army after 23 years of service, culminating in a successful career as a public affairs officer while assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense from 2005-09. During his career, he also commanded the 14th Public Affairs Detachment during its one-year deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and he led Headquarters Company, 217th Field Artillery Battalion in Camp Hovey, Korea, from 1997-99.

Johnson is a certified Level 2 coach and has coached and managed international athletes and USA national teams in world competitions, as well as coached the All-Army track and field team. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in Christian studies at Trinity International University in Davie.

**Retired Maj. Thomas "Troop" Johnson, the senior Army instructor at W.T. Dwyer High School, works with some school athletes. Johnson was inducted into the Florida Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame.** *Photo submitted*

## Cadets participate in annual Army-Navy game

*2nd Brigade*

Nearly 200 Cadets from a dozen 2nd Brigade schools took part in pre-game ceremonies in December's annual clash between the Army and Navy football teams.

Army ROTC Cadets from programs in New York and Pennsylvania stood with Cadets from the United States Military Academy at West Point in a formation on the playing turf of Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia prior to the kickoff of the 111th annual contest.

The Cadets took part in the tradition of the Cadet Corps marching into the stadium and saluting the crowd.

Among the dignitaries present at the event were the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey and eight living Medal of Honor winners.

The U.S. Naval Academy beat Army 31-17.

**Army ROTC Cadets from programs in New York and Pennsylvania stand with Cadets from the United States Military Academy at West Point in a formation on the playing turf of Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia prior to the kickoff of the 111th annual contest.** *Photo submitted*

# School's out

*December marks start of careers for many ROTC grads*

**A number of programs bid farewell to the newest group of commissioned Army leaders in December. Commissioning ceremonies were held nationwide as Cadets pinned on gold bars. (Above) Cadets at San Diego State University were commissioned aboard the famed aircraft carrier U.S.S. Midway, which is docked and serves as a museum in San Diego Bay. Second Lt. Andrew Capiral shows off his officer's saber he received in recognition of being San Diego State's top December commissionee. Opposite page, clockwise from top, Cadets Dylan Santrock, left, and Amanda Lubrecht, center, receive the oath of office Dec. 18. The two were students at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, a partnership school of the Bucknell University program. Second Lt. Jacob Brakeman signs his oath of office Dec. 18 at Missouri University of Science and Technology's commissioning event. Caden O'Connor pins second lieutenant bars on his mother, 2nd Lt. Renee O'Connor of Fargo, N.D., during North Dakota State University's commissioning ceremony Dec. 17. New Mexico State University's newest second lieutenants commissioned Dec. 10 were, from left to right, Ligia Rodriquez-Rosado, Jared Melendez, Joshua Walsh and Ernest Carlson.** *All photos submitted*

# Spreading the word

## ROTC on display at Army All-American Bowl

**Cadet Wesley Tudor, the top Cadet on the Order of Merit List and a student at Morehead State University in Kentucky, speaks about the benefits of ROTC to participants at the National Combine, sponsored by Cadet Command, at the Army All-American Bowl in January.** *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

Perhaps the greatest obstacles facing Army ROTC aren't necessarily a lack of desire to serve or even a lack of prospects.

Misconceptions often stymie success.

Start with the ROTC name – Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Cadet Command leaders frequently encounter people who believe being part of the program means having to serve in the Reserve force, when, in actuality, some 4,000 ROTC commissionees received active duty assignments last year.

"We need to spread the word," said Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, Cadet Command's commanding general.

A variety of events at January's 11th annual U.S. Army All-American Bowl offered Cadet Command a forum to tell the organization's story, to tout its mission and to showcase its people. Part of the event paired leadership with an audience of VIPs from around the country who can play pivotal roles in influencing young people to consider opportunities to serve in the Army through ROTC.

Among them where high school and college educators, legislators and entrepreneurs.

At a panel discussion with some 80 VIPs, McDonald highlighted the Army's commitment, and specifically ROTC's, to education via collegiate scholarships. Awarding more than $300 million to students annually, Cadet Command gives more scholarships than any organization nationwide.

During the weeklong festivities leading up to the Jan. 8 game pitting many of the top high school football recruits from the eastern and western parts of the country, Cadet Command illustrated its educational commitment by handing out four scholarships collectively totaling roughly $450,000 to graduating seniors. One presentation took place during the game's third quarter before a national TV audience.

"For many people, they can get this opportunity for education, and they can get it for free," McDonald told those at the panel discussion.

Deborah Barnes, a high school principal in Tallahassee, Fla., wants negative perceptions and attitudes toward the Army to change. To help stem the tide, she routinely invites Soldiers to her school to talk about their successes serving the country and to outline similar opportunities to students.

Barnes said she tries to present military service as a viable option to students. In fact, she prides herself in having helped recruit 23 students for the Army in one year.

"I present it like, 'Do you want to serve your country or your community?' " Barnes said, asking fellow VIPs to help in the effort to change mindsets toward the military. "It has never been a second choice to protect the country."

Maj. Otto Padron, a Reservist from Miami who also works for Univision, said recruiters must target families. Without the support of parents and siblings, a prospect will likely consider a career in something else.

Padron, whose family defected from Cuba, struggled to convince his mother, who held negative views of the military in their homeland, that serving in the U.S. Army would be beneficial. Finding innovative means to promote the Army can go a long way toward winning favor, he said.

He pointed to a presentation he saw last summer while serving as a cadre member at the Leader's Training Course at Fort Knox, Ky. Padron said he was wowed by the still and video visuals and commander's detailed discussion about training at the course for prospective Army ROTC Cadets and the educational and career opportunities available.

"Had my parents seen that, it would have been an instant decision for them to say, 'The Army is for you,' " Padron said.

At a bowl week clinic with high school football coaches from across the country, McDonald teamed with Lt. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, Accessions Command commander, and Maj. Gen. Don Campbell, commander of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, to speak about how developing military leaders parallels their efforts in building gridiron standouts through the use of standards and instilling discipline.

While the odds are statistically against most high school athletes playing, let alone excelling, at top-rated universities, coaches can help the Army – and most importantly their players – by making

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By Steve Arel • U.S. Army Cadet Command

**Maj. Gen Mark McDonald, Cadet Command commander, speaks to VIPs about Army ROTC at an education panel hosted by the command at the All-American Bowl.** *Photo by Steve Arel*

**Col. David Hubner, Cadet Command chief of staff, makes a point while talking to players in San Antonio for the National Combine. He told them about opportunities to serve in the Army with the help of Army ROTC.** *Photo by Steve Arel*

**Col. Barrye Price, Cadet Command's deputy commanding officer, announces Stefon Diggs of Olney, Md., as the most outstanding participant of the All-American Bowl National Combine.** *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

# Making an Impression

Alabama State Sen. Bobby Singleton prepares to jump at 14,000 feet with the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute team on a tandem jump. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

Armando V. Pomar, from Florida International University, free-falls above San Antonio while strapped to a member of the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute team. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

## Cadet Command educates VIPs on ROTC and Army

No fan of firearms, there was Lillian Johnson with a 12-gauge shotgun in her hands taking aim at clay targets whizzing across a field at the San Antonio Gun Club.

With a member of the Army Marksmanship Unit coaching her from behind, the assistant dean at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, squeezed the trigger, launching buckshot that shattered the orange, clay target.

"What an experience," Johnson said.

Lilian Johnson, assistant dean for academic advising and transfer services at Wright State University, zeros in on a skeet during a VIP marksmanship shoot at the San Antonio Gun Club. *Photo by Steve Arel*

About two dozen VIPs from around the country with connections to Army ROTC were invited by Cadet Command to be part of the festivities in early January leading up to the 11th annual Army All-American Bowl. The competitive shooting exhibition, featuring mentorship from some of the Army's top shooters – two of whom are Olympic gold medalists – was one of those events.

Cadet Command leadership used various functions throughout the week to show the VIPs, also referred to as centers of influence, what the Army and ROTC does, how it functions and opportunities available to men and women who want to serve.

The hope is the VIPs, armed with a better understanding of the military, can articulate what they've seen, learned and experienced while in San Antonio to others back in their communities.

"I'm a storyteller," said Johnson, who works with students who have transferred to Wright State or are undecided on a major. "When I talk to my students, I always have a story, and this is one of those stories I will tell."

Alabama state Sen. Bobby Singleton left Texas with a story to tell, too. He was one of several Cadet Command VIPs who took the chance to jump with the famed Golden Knights.

Singleton felt he was ready to leap out of a plane at 14,000 feet over San Antonio's Stinson Field. But at the moment of truth, as his toes dangled over empty space, Singleton had a quick gut check.

"When I hit that door, I got this nervous feeling and thought, 'What

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*By Steve Arel and Forrest Berkshire • U.S. Army Cadet Command*

Veronica Perez, left, and Jamie Carpenter take the oath of office, administered by U.S. Army Cadet Command commander Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, on the field just before kickoff of the 2011 U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

## New officers take oath before kickoff

**By Steve Arel**
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

It generally takes four years to develop a Cadet. It took about a minute last month to transition two students from Cadets to second lieutenants.

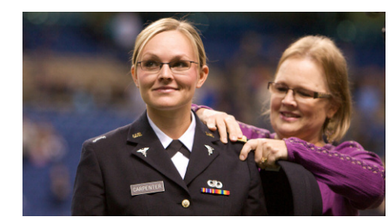
The Army's newest officers received their oaths of office on the Alamodome field prior to kickoff Jan. 8 of the 11th annual All-American Bowl in what proved to be a demonstration of ROTC's mission: commission the future leadership of the U.S. Army.

For Veronica Perez of the University of Texas-San Antonio and Jamie Carpenter of the University of the Incarnate Word, the event before nearly 30,000 people closed the chapter on their foundational training and the beginning of another as leaders of Soldiers.

"Now it's time to go to work and become a true leader," Perez said.

The two took their oaths from Maj. Gen. Mark McDonald, commanding general for U.S. Army Cadet Command.

Perez, a kinesiology major, and Carpenter, an athletic training major, both branched into the Medical Services Corps and are Reservists. The pair actually commissioned Dec. 17 at their schools.



Jamie Carpenter's mother pins on the gold bars of a second lieutenant at the All-American Bowl. *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

So the All-American Bowl event was ceremonial, but that didn't diminish the importance of highlighting the culmination of their success.

"I've learned to become a leader, and ROTC has taught me life skills," said Carpenter, who added that the commissioning was a chance for many family members in town to see the event they missed a few weeks earlier. "It has made me who I am today. With ROTC, I've done things I would never have done if I didn't join. It tells kids out that there are things they can do other than not go to school."

Perez, 26, is not only the first commissioned officer in her family. She was the first high school grad and now the first college grad.

After being part of Junior ROTC at her San Antonio high school, Perez set her sights on enlisting and becoming a drill sergeant, a position where she could shape and mold citizens into Soldiers.

Encouragement from an NCO at the University of Texas-San Antonio changed her mind.

"I just always thought drill sergeants were cool," Perez said. "ROTC was an easier route to being a leader and" to obtaining a college degree.

In preparing for the Basic Officer Leadership Course, she was working with her Reserve unit, the 228th Combat Support Hospital in San Antonio, for what she sees as a position with over-

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am I doing?' " Singleton said once he was back on the ground.

But Singleton knew he was in good hands. His jangled nerves were steadied by the knowledge that he literally had a U.S. Army Golden Knights parachutist strapped to his back for the tandem jump. And that knowledge was enough to get him out the door.

For Armando V. Palomar, from Florida International University, the jump and 45-second free-fall was almost an out-of-body experience.

"The fall feels like another world," said the 70-year-old Palomar, who had not jumped from an airplane since the 1960s. "Psychologically, this is the best experience you can have. The experience is that you are free from all the constraints of daily life."

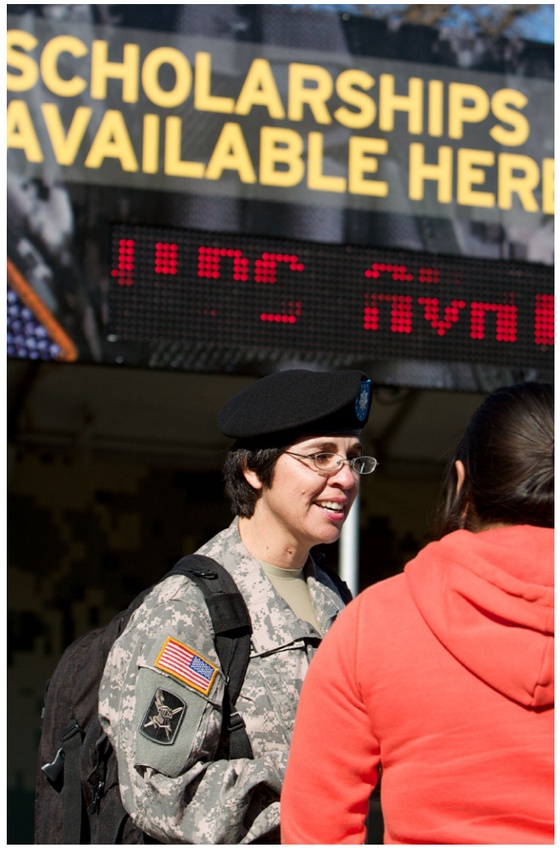
James Morales, another COI for Cadet Command and the vice president for student services at Utah State University, said experiencing the skills and professionalism of the Soldiers who held their lives in their hands gave him a fresh perspective on the Army.

"It's great to see it firsthand, hear their stories and what they do," Morales said.

"I just trusted him with my life," he said of the Golden Knight he jumped with. "It gives just a little more credence to this motto 'Army Strong.' "

Back at the marksmanship event, Mike Yesalonia welcomed the chance to broaden his knowledge of the military and to interact with men and women in uniform.

While at the gun club, frustration set in quick for the Norwich University director of athletic recruiting and marketing development. He wanted to be competitive with the others as his shots missed several targets that had launched into the air and disappeared untouched into the brush on the range.




**Lt. Col. Maricela Alvarado, the professor of military science at University of Texas-Pan American, explains the ROTC program to a high-schooler at the Army Strong Zone outside the Alamodome in San Antonio.** *Photo by Forrest Berkshire*

But he finished on a high note.

"I nailed that last one," Yesalonia said. "That's all I care about. I finished right."

After the initial rush of firing wore off, Bernard Hamilton realized he hadn't hit a single target. So he listened to his marksmanship unit coach and settled in.

"Without that guy there, I would've been in Lost City," Hamilton said.

Hamilton, who works for the National Alliance of Black School Educators, said his participation in various activities connected to the All-American Bowl will go a long way in helping him better market the Army to young people and to promote the opportunities it offers.

"We need to do a better job of letting young people know what's involved in serving the country and how to be part of something that's worth being part of," Hamilton said. "It's being able to convey to them what young, talented people can provide if they give it a chance."

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them aware of opportunities to shine in uniform.

"We need you to be advocates for us," McDonald told the coaches.

McDonald admitted to the VIPs at the panel event that military service isn't for everyone. But he wants to ensure prospects are armed with the proper information about opportunities before ruling it out.

"Few issues are more important than the education of our youth," McDonald said. "Education leads to the strength of our country. … We're all doing the same thing in providing leaders to our country to keep it strong and moving forward."

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whelming responsibility.

"Leading Soldiers is a big deal," Perez said. "Their parents are saying, 'You have my son in your hands. Make sure you bring him back home safe.' "

Over the last few years, Perez has received constant tutelage from her husband, Jose Alberto Perez, a retired lieutenant colonel who served 24 years. He spent many hours talking with his wife about leadership and effective decision-making.

"This is a new generation, and they have to deal with a lot of different challenges," Jose Alberto Perez said. "She'll do well. Every officer has their own leadership style. It's about getting different experiences to develop that style."

Carpenter, 24, is married with an 18-month-old child. She delivered while still in school and was determined not to let it cause her to miss a semester, which she didn't.

The first in her family to join the Army, Carpenter received an ROTC scholarship after graduating high school in San Diego. She wanted to become an officer to benefit her family and her country.

Carpenter said, growing up, she often served as a leader with softball and soccer teams on which she played. And ROTC honed those skills.

But being a leader of Soldiers, she said, comes with considerable challenges.

"It'll be tough," Carpenter said. "But that's part of the thrill and excitement."



# It pays to discover PaYS

## Employer program reduces uncertainty of pending part-time service for Cadets

*Staff Report*

Army Cadets embarking on a Reserve or National Guard career at a shaky economic period can thank their Reserve Officers' Training Corps involvement for an opportunity to join some of the nation's most stable and prestigious corporations full-time.

The Partnership for Youth Success, or PaYS, is a strategic partnership between the Army and companies like Boeing, Amazon, Hyundai, Southwest Airlines, Pepsi and more than 360 others, which offer current and former Soldiers the opportunity to have a face-to-face job interview. The program, part of Recruiting Command since 2000, became available to Cadet Command in 2008.

And it's considered by many to be another advantage for Cadets, whose non-ROTC peers face even more employment uncertainty.

"PaYS is a perfect fit for Cadets who will commission into the Reserve component," said Col. Paul Wood, deputy commanding officer for operations for Cadet Command. "It's likely that a Cadet who will graduate from college, commission as an Army lieutenant and begin serving in a Reserve or National Guard capacity may also be looking for a full-time job. That's a lot of change all at once. PaYS offers the opportunity to get a foot in the door in the civilian sector."

The program features 52 Fortune 500 partners across the country, plus dozens of local and regional employers in nearly every state, representing more than 84,000 job announcements projected over the next four years. And there is plenty of room for more, Wood said.

"It's shocking, especially considering the state of our economy, that more Cadets aren't beating a path to take advantage of this program," Wood said.

More than 1,500 Cadets and graduates are currently enrolled in PaYS. Cadets are made aware of the program during their senior year of college. It's not possible to say how many have accepted jobs, as reporting isn't required.

But success stories exist.

Mark Campbell, a 2010 graduate of Morehead State University in Kentucky, now a second lieutenant in the Army National Guard, recently scored a job with Amazon.com in Lexington, Ky. In fact, within a week of making his resume available to Amazon.com, Campbell interviewed and was hired.

**Mark Campbell, a second lieutenant in the National Guard, used the PaYS program to link up with Amazon.com.** *Photo submitted*

"I had other interviews, but I took the job with Amazon because they have great pay and benefits," Campbell said.

Amazon will accommodate his basic officer leadership course, which began Feb. 2, and his National Guard drill schedule, Campbell said, and there are supervisors with military experience uniquely qualified to mentor him.

The professor of military science at Morehead, Maj. Robert Mason, said Campbell walked into a great opportunity.

"That opportunity was there because of the quality of the young leaders who emerge from Army ROTC," said Mason, who is working with another Cadet enrolled in PaYS. "It's also a benefit to the business world" to send a role model and leader into their midst.

James Knox, a 2009 graduate of Wilberforce University in Dayton, Ohio, and a National Guard officer, received his first employment contact from PaYS partner Union Pacific, a transportation company that is nearly a century and a half old. Knox, who has a degree in electrical engineering, is an engineering associate for the company. After six months of training, he'll take on a supervisory role.

Union Pacific boasts of being military friendly – its website claims some of its first employees were Civil War veterans.

"I was looking for a company that was very flexible and understood my commitment to the Army," Knox said. "Union Pacific has been very flexible."

Once the connection between Cadet and PaYS partner is made, obtaining the job is completely based on how fit the candidate is for employment. There is no guarantee a Cadet will actually get hired.

**The program features 52 Fortune 500 partners across the country.**

Knox received an initial phone call from a hiring manager at Union Pacific, which quickly led to an all-expense paid trip to Omaha, Neb., for an in-person interview.

"Cadets should prepare for the job interview with their PaYS partner like they would any other interview," said Cindy Misner, a PaYS program administrator.

"Military officers, whether serving on active duty or in the Reserve component, are highly sought-after employees for a number of reasons: leadership skills, professional demeanor, ability to communicate, reliability, problem-solving skills as well as health and fitness levels," Wood said.

# New buildings add to ROTC experience

**Pictured above, key stakeholders from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point participate in a ground-breaking ceremony held in 2010 for the new building addition to the campus fitness center. The new 5,000-square-foot space, to be commissioned solely for Army ROTC use in April, will be equipped with furnishings, digital capabilities for each classroom, office space and storage units. Pictured from left to right are Cadet Battalion Commander Travis Fielder, Chancellor Mark Nook, Stevens Point Mayor Andrew Halverson, Cadet Command Command Sgt. Maj. Hershel Turner, 3rd Brigade Commander Col. Sharon Wisniewski, Wisconsin Army National Guard Col. Kevin Greenwood, UWSP Dean Joan North and UWSP Professor of Military Science Lt. Col. Jeff Kurka.**

**By Esther Dacanay**
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

It begins with a leadership vision, an architectural blueprint and a check. A big check, that is, when it comes to breaking ground on new facilities for Cadets and cadre at some Army ROTC battalions nationwide.

The latest windfall in a string of construction projects is at the University of Texas-Austin, where an alumnus recently contributed $15 million for erecting a building that will house all of the campus's ROTC units.

Some Army programs that recently moved into new structures or are awaiting new facilities are finding that improved surroundings can have a major positive impact on the program.

Since 2008, the 240 Cadets of the Suncoast Battalion at the University of South Florida have trained in the school's Joint Military Leadership Center, a $10.1 million, four-story structure that is considered the university's most technologically-advanced educational facility. Its 53,000 square feet of space features room for five classrooms and three lecture halls equipped with capabilities that enable users to reach beyond the campus walls through video-conferencing, distance learning and Web-casting.

In addition, the joint center, home to Army, Air Force and Navy ROTC, includes office and storage space; a weapons simulation room; a joint Cadet/midshipmen lounge; a computer lab and library; public meeting spaces and administrative office space for center staff and ROTC cadre. The stairwell also has a platform that leads out to the rappelling area.

The University of South Florida pumped an additional $1.2 million of its supplemental funding into the building for furnishings, a weapons simulator and top-of-the-line audio/visual equipment, said retired Navy Cmdr. John Sarao, JMLC associate director.

The implementation of a joint center at a university, the first in the nation, Sarao said, was the main impetus for obtaining a federal grant to provide funding for construction, initial start-up and operations of the new facility.

"Our ROTC programs had no real unit integrity prior to entering the JMLC," Sarao said. "In the other buildings, we always had to compete for classroom space. Now, we have top priority in classroom scheduling, and our facility allows us to effectively conduct more joint training."

When it comes to training America's future military officers with unique core competencies and skills in leadership, global understanding and defense strategies, joint training among all branches of service is key because of the continuing transformation of America's armed forces in a dynamic and challenging global environment.

Although the importance of joint training is well known and understood among most ROTC units, the 350 University of Texas-Austin students enrolled in Navy, Air Force and Army ROTC will also be putting that concept to practice when their six-story, $95.7 million liberal arts building is complete in 2013. In the meantime, the Army and Navy units operate out of the university's Sanchez building, while the Air Force unit trains in Bellmont Hall.

The ROTC programs at Texas have historically been administratively part of the College of Liberal Arts, the school's largest academic unit. For the last 50 years, the ROTC programs resided in their own building, Steindam Hall, which was formally decommissioned in August because ground-breaking for the new structure has commenced.

The new liberal arts building will be constructed on the same site of Steindam Hall and the top floor, with 20,000 square feet, will be dedicated for ROTC. The quarters will accommodate large navigational charts and so-called sand tables, which are essentially oversized sandboxes where the terrain can be shaped to match that of various parts of the world for simulating ground maneuvers.

Approximately $15 million of the university's new liberal arts building expense was donated by a Houston oil executive and his wife. The pledge, given by James Mulva, chairman and CEO of Conoco Phillips, and his wife, Miriam, reflects their appreciation of the Navy ROTC training he underwent as a Texas student in the 1960s.

Prior to the Mulvas offering a pledge, the university had originally planned to raze Steindham Hall, construct a new liberal arts building at the same site and move the ROTC programs to a less-central location on campus.

That raised concern among campus ROTC alumni, including Mulva.

"This is a time when ROTC is in need of new facilities on campus," he said. "For us, it's important, almost an obligation, that we give back to those institutions that have been important to us in our development. That includes ROTC. That includes the University of Texas at Austin."

High visibility is vital when it comes to ROTC programs establishing a prominent presence on campus. University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's Pointer Battalion knows that all too well. Since 1972, the battalion has been housed in one of the oldest buildings at the university – a former library on the edge of campus, far from most other classrooms and dormitories. The department is split between two floors, in a building that demonstrates years of wear and tear in its carpeting, tile and paint.

Come April, a $2.3 million, 5,000-square-foot custom-designed space, complete with office space, computer lab, conference rooms, supply facility, library and classrooms with high-tech digital capabilities, will be dedicated to UWSP's Military Science Department and be home to the Pointer Battalion.

"Aside from the many obvious benefits," said Maj. Rob Kehoe, the program's executive officer. "Our new building will give ROTC higher visibility on campus, the Cadets will feel more integrated with the rest of the student body and it will offer advanced resources for cadre and Cadets."

The building space is actually an addition to the university's athletic facility, which houses an area for strength training, an aerobic exercise room, locker rooms, basketball courts, a racquetball court and an indoor pool, with close proximity to the indoor track and wrestling rooms.

**The new building at South Florida University.** *Photo submitted*

"In our current building, we have no dedicated supply space," Kehoe said. "When the Cadets conduct their physical training now, they have to bring all the equipment over to the fitness center from across campus. But our new space offers dedicated storage units and immediate access to the fitness center."

Newer facilities and advanced resources can go a long way when building an Army ROTC brand image on campus. After all, when students first inquire about university ROTC programs, the first thing they see is the training facility. And as the adage goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. That is one reason the Iron Knights Battalion at the University of Central Florida has also fought for decades to get funding for a new training facility.

At the moment, Cadets are trained in a set of 15-year-old portable trailers, which were supposed to be only a two-year temporary solution, said Lt. Col. Sean Morgan, the professor of military science.

"In our current facility," he said, "prospective Cadets and their families will come to this beautiful campus in Orlando, they see it's a great place, they hear about all the incredible things ROTC is doing. But then they see the infrastructure of our building, and it just doesn't match up."

As a result, Morgan said, some potential recruits end up attending other schools "because of the footprint we're on." Furthermore, the current standing of the Iron Knights is nearly 250 strong. But that's mainly due to the fact that the current facility and cadre strength cannot support a larger enrollment roster.

However, when the $23 million, three-story building is done by 2012, the Iron Knights will claim a portion of one 30,000-square-foot floor and share it with the Air Force ROTC unit on campus.

The state-funded building project has been planned for a couple of decades. But what kick-started it was a conversation between a few ROTC cadre and members of the local city congress during a 2009 Veterans Day observation. The congressional members inquired about what could be done to help ROTC, and the cadre mentioned a new building.

Some rooms in the new facility will be outfitted for virtual lab battle, Morgan said. It will allow more hands-on simulations, giving Cadets the ability to train through the mission, as opposed to only classroom-style learning on white boards and PowerPoint presentations given in portable trailers.

"This will really accelerate our training, and it will give us more opportunity for growth, possibly taking our enrollment up to 400," he said. "A number of our alumni, who are now serving in Afghanistan, have heard about the new building project and they are thrilled because they know what it means to the Cadets who are now training to be officers and leaders in the field."

For many Army ROTC units, entering a new training facility is not just about relocating offices. It's about improving the dynamics of leadership for the theater and supporting Army transformation.

"Not only will our training and education benefit greatly," said Cadet Nicholas Rinartz from the Pointer Battalion, "but our increased presence on campus will draw the interest of many students."

**Newly-contracted Western Kentucky University ROTC Cadets take their oaths during a football game in September. WKU was named the MacArthur Award winner for 7th Brigade U.S. Army Cadet Command. One school in each of the command's eight brigades are named each year. The award is given to the top battalion in each brigade.** *Photo submitted*

# Top programs for 2009-10 named as MacArthur Award winners

*Staff Report*

Eight battalions from across the country have been recognized as the top Army ROTC programs in the nation.

The schools – one representative from each of Cadet Command's eight brigades – were selected from 273 host programs in January as recipients of the MacArthur Award based on performance for the 2009-10 school year, according to the command.

Winners were:

**1st Brigade –** Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

**2nd Brigade –** St. John's University, New York

**3rd Brigade –** University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Minneapolis

**4th Brigade –** James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va.

**5th Brigade –** Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas

**6th Brigade –** Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Ga.

**7th Brigade –** Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Ky.

**8th Brigade –** Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Wash.

The awards have been given annually since 1989 by Cadet Command in conjunction with the Norfolk, Va.-based General Douglas MacArthur Foundation. They are designed to recognize programs that best represent the ideals of "duty, honor, country" as practiced by MacArthur.

While a battalion's commissioning mission carries the most weight, consideration for the awards also includes Cadet performance on the National Order of Merit List and retention rates.

The commandant of Texas A&M University recognized the effort it takes to earn such recognition.

"This is not something that happens overnight and requires a strong determination and commitment to excellence that so many have come to expect from the Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets and Army ROTC," Brig. Gen. Joe Ramirez Jr. said. "I know that former students and former Cadets of Texas A&M share my pride in this remarkable accomplishment."

The eight Cadet Command brigades are based at the following locations: 1st Brigade, Fort Knox, Ky; 2nd Brigade, Fort Dix, N.J.; 3rd Brigade, Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Ill.; 4th Brigade, Fort Bragg, N.C.; 5th Brigade, Fort Sam Houston, Texas; 6th Brigade, Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.; 7th Brigade, Fort Knox, Ky.; and 8th Brigade, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

# Focus on ROTC and Ivy League as DADT repealed

**By Forrest Berkshire**
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

The relationship between the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and the elite universities of the Ivy League has been thrust into the limelight with the repeal of the military's ban on gay and lesbian Soldiers serving openly in the military.

Since the 1960s, ROTC has not had an official presence on many of the nation's most prestigious universities. Originally, many ROTC battalions left those campuses as sentiment turned against the military over the Vietnam conflict. Those relationships were never fully repaired and ROTC was kept off many campuses because school leaders felt the ban violated their organizations' anti-discrimination policies.

Despite the program being officially banned on most Ivy campuses, ROTC Cadets are enrolled in the universities, and participate in ROTC through partnership programs, such as Harvard's Cadets who attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for their ROTC classes.

But with the repeal of the ban, the possibility of ROTC returning to the Ivies has spurred discussion in the media and on campuses.

As of the end of January, Cadet Command had received no official requests from any of the campuses where ROTC was banned to have the program reinstated.

Despite the lack of official requests, there have been some indications that at least some of the schools would like to see ROTC return.

Drew Faust, Harvard University's president, has generated the majority of media interest in public comments.

She was quoted in a Nov. 18 issue of the school's newspaper saying, "As a further embodiment of that tradition [of service], a ROTC program open to all ought to be fully and formally present on our campus."

At several universities, such as Harvard, Stanford and Columbia, faculty senates and other commissions are looking at the possibility of ROTC on their campuses.

Although the ban was repealed by law, it is still in force until the military certifies it is ready and has a plan in place for transitions. President Barack Obama called in his State of the Union speech for the transition to be complete this year. And the Pentagon announced in January that training of commanders and chaplains on how to handle openly gay troops will begin this month.



# Going for gold

## *ROTC grad racing with U.S. Bobsled Team*

**Members of the U.S. Bobsled Team compete in a recent race.** *Photo submitted by U.S. Bobsled Team*

**By Jeremy O'Bryan**
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

Fresh off finishing 12th in the nation in track and field's hammer throw event last summer, NCAA athlete Kristi Koplin might have wondered what she would do next.

The recent ROTC graduate was a newly minted Army second lieutenant heading into a job as an Army nurse. She was serving as a goldbar recruiter for Southern Utah University's Army ROTC battalion, the program through which she was commissioned, when a targeted Internet message opened another door.

"I got a Facebook message from a former national bobsled team member who was recruiting for the U.S. team," Koplin said.

The message wasn't aimed at her by chance, but rather Koplin's NCAA record made her a standout.

"I was excited," she said. "It wasn't something I had ever thought of doing."

Koplin drove the few hours to national team tryouts at Park City, Utah, where she participated in a combine. Then she paid her own way to trials in Lake Placid, N.Y., where she finished first among the rookies in attendance.

Now, alongside her Army career, the 24-year-old Koplin is an "Olympic hopeful," having been invited to join the U.S. National Bobsled Team. As a brakeman, Job 1 is to push the bobsled down the first 45 meters of track.

"When I decided to contract as a Cadet in ROTC, I had no idea that I would be bobsledding four years later," Koplin said.

The rigor and high expectations that characterize Army training have helped Koplin achieve what some said she couldn't.

"Throughout college, people told me, 'You can't do all of that. You won't be able to juggle track, ROTC and nursing school.' But I did it," Koplin said. "Graduated from nursing school, became a national qualifier in the hammer throw and commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army."

Now add being an Army nurse and a U.S. national team member.

"Nothing is impossible," Koplin said.

She credits Army ROTC for strengthening her in preparation for taking on opportunities that require additional hard work and focus, such as competing for a spot on the U.S. Olympic team.

"In bobsled, there are a lot of things that you must do without training or guidance," Koplin said. "You don't have a coach babysitting you, making sure you are working hard and finishing that last squat set or the last sprint."

**Kristi Koplin**

Doing what needs to be done – without being asked – is something ROTC has helped her develop, Koplin said.

"What separates one person from the next is doing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done – and doing your very best every time," she said.

Koplin is in Europe on the second half of the World Cup tour, which takes place in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. The team spends a week at different tracks doing three to four days of training runs, then races Friday and Saturday against countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Brazil, Australia, Monaco, Canada and others.

"While I am in each location, I continue to train, doing weightlifting and sprint workouts five days a week," Koplin said. "At the end of our races on Saturday, we pack up the bobsleds and travel by trucks to the next location on the tour. It is really like a band that tours for each show, but we are a bobsled team touring for each race."

Dave Owens, head coach of the women's squad, said Koplin brings hard work and a positive attitude to the team.

"Kristi has proven herself as a great teammate," Owens said. "She is one of our top-ranked rookies and improving daily. She will not shy away from the work to be done."

Selections for the 2014 U.S. Olympic Team occur in the few months before the Olympics, Koplin said. A selection committee will meet and decide on the brakemen and drivers for the team.

Owens said Koplin "has shown the potential of being in the mix when the time comes."

Assistant professor of military science at SUU, Maj. Robert Warden, said cadre have been working with Cadet Command officials to adjust Koplin's Army training dates as far as practicable to allow her an opportunity to train and compete while she serves the Army.

Toward the end of February, Koplin will fly back to the States and finish her goldbar recruiter duty at Southern Utah University, then attend the Officer Basic Course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, through May 2011.

# JROTC region drill meets could end

## *New plans under way for Army national competition*

**Members of Francis Lewis High School's armed exhibition team perform at the 2010 Eastern Drill Championships in Macon, Ga. This might be the final year for regional meets.** *Photo by Steve Arel*

**By Steve Arel**
*U.S. Army Cadet Command*

When Junior ROTC programs compete in Phoenix and Maryland this spring for drill team championships, it might be the last time they'll do so at the regional level.

Event organizers plan to pitch an idea to JROTC leadership in the coming months that would combine the region meets into a single competition. A decision could come sometime this summer, with a new national competition taking place in spring 2012, said Leon McMullen, deputy director for JROTC.

The location would likely be in or near Louisville, Ky., just north of Cadet Command's Fort Knox headquarters, he said.

"It's in the middle of the country; that's what I like about it," McMullen said. "I'm almost positive this is the last year for the region-level meets."

The change aims to cut down on costs for many program and to diversify the competition field.

JROTC leadership couldn't eliminate the region meets for this year because "they were already in motion," McMullen said. The western competition is set for March 12, with the eastern meet scheduled for March 26.

A number of schools often skip the region events anyway because they are held too close in the year to state meets. And with the national meet only a month or so after the regionals, programs can't raise enough money to participate in all of them.

The way McMullen envisions it, each of Cadet Command's seven geographic brigades will hold meets. Only a select number of schools – based on the brigade's size and number of competing programs – will advance to the Army national.

Cadet Command will offset some of the expenses for each program to travel to that meet, McMullen said. The top five teams in the armed and unarmed divisions at the Army national will receive additional financial aid to compete in the National High School Drill Team Championships in Daytona Beach, Fla.

**Justin Gates, SNI's competition director, said he sees an obvious positive move in scrapping regional meets: the emergence of a true Army national champion.**

"The Army national will give us a better view of the competition level actually out there," said McMullen, referring to the fact that only a small number of JROTC's 1,688 programs take part in the regionals.

Sports Network International is doing much of the research of how an Army national meet would function. SNI, as it's commonly called, has run the region events since they began almost a decade ago and the national meet since it started 28 years ago.

Justin Gates, SNI's competition director, said he sees an obvious positive move in scrapping regional meets: the emergence of a true Army national champion.

A central location also would enable planners to better build the meet and establish rapport with facilities managers and competition judges he said. As it stands now, the eastern meet rotates each year between the Washington, D.C., area and Macon, Ga. The western meet is in Phoenix for the first time after being in San Antonio since its start.

SNI representatives visited potential sites in Louisville in January. Gates anticipates SNI will recommend that Cadet Command choose between either Louisville or Washington, D.C., as the location for the Army national meet.

"D.C. helps further JROTC's mission" of developing better citizens, he said. Competing in the current eastern regional "may be the only time in their lives they get to go to the nation's capital. Is there any better location for a JROTC competition?

"You could make an argument for either one. But this is (Cadet Command's) call."

**Jordan Bjoralt, of Henderson County High School in Kentucky, peers through the sight of her rifle before firing a shot in the sporter division during a past National JROTC Air Rifle Championship. Army JROTC shooters this month begin the road to the next national meet.** *File photo*

# Army shooters look to repeat success

**By John Wayne Liston**
*U. S. Army Cadet Command*

After setting new records last year and sweeping the team national marksmanship championships, Army Junior ROTC shooters are looking to repeat their success beginning this month.

Cadets who qualified through the Army's JROTC Air Rifle Postal Competition will head to the Civilian Marksmanship Program's training centers at Anniston, Ala., or Camp Perry, Ohio, to compete in the 2011 Army JROTC Service Championship Feb. 17-19.

A postal match is one where competitors fire on their home ranges using specific targets. The fired targets are then sent to a scoring agency – the CMP in this instance – for scoring and ranking.

Siegel High School, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., set a new precision record last year, and Ozark High School, from Ozark, Mo., won the sporter division. Shooters from both programs took home several individual awards.

"To be able to have these kids look back and reflect on their hard work and effort and how it resulted in a national championship will be something they remember for a lifetime," said retired Master Sgt. Jim Thurston, Army instructor for Siegel High School.

This will be the first year of the service championships being held simultaneously at two places. Multiple locations allow the program to grow in numbers and reduce travel costs, said Leon McMullen, deputy director for Army JROTC.

Cadets from Cadet Command's 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 8th brigades will go to Camp Perry, while those from the 4th, 5th and 6th brigades will head to Anniston.

Awards will be given at both locations. Results will then be combined to determine the top scorers who will advance to the national championship. The top unit teams and at-large individuals will compete with the top marksmen from all services' JROTC units March 24-26 in Anniston.

Cadets can compete in two different three-position air rifle events. Precision air rifle is modeled after Olympic-style shooting and allows the use of specialized target rifles and shooting equipment. Sporter air rifle is designed for competitors who want to compete with little customization or specialized shooting equipment.

In both types of shooting, competitors fire at targets at a distance of 10 meters in prone, standing and kneeling positions.

The Army teams emerged victorious at last year's national championships, beating out the other services and capturing all of the awards for the first time since the event started in 2003. Ozark's Tyler Ferguson broke the overall kneeling position record last year, shooting a 197 out of 200.

"Cadet Ferguson told me a couple of years ago he was going to break this record," said retired 1st Sgt. Perry Thompson, Army instructor for Ozark. "He made it one of his goals, and he did it in his last match."

Marksmanship is a cerebral sport, forcing competitors to maintain concentration, discipline and focus.

"People say marksmanship is 98 percent mental and 2 percent physical," said Vicki Donoho, program coordinator from the Civilian Marksmanship Program.

The CMP is a national organization created by law in 1996 and is dedicated to training and educating responsible uses of firearms and air guns. The CMP trained 2,265 Army Junior ROTC Cadets in 2010 and more than 8,000 Cadets from all United States JROTC programs. It has also awarded 53 scholarships to Army Cadets this past year.

"This sport reinforces the values we want to see in our Cadets: self-discipline, focus, personal courage, integrity and accountability," McMullen said. "You can't just walk out on the firing line and shoot competitively. It takes a lot of practice. If Cadets maintain their focus and self-discipline, this sport can help them become better citizens and even take them all the way to the Olympics."

# RIDING HIGH IN THE SADDLE

## *Texas border town boasts the country's only mounted Junior ROTC unit*

A Cadet positions one of the horses of the 12th Cavalry memorial unit for grooming recently at Rio Grande City High School. Cadets assist in the care and feeding of the animals as their school schedule permits.

*The smell of aged-leather, the sight of crisp campaign hats and the sound of a creaky covered wagon set against the backdrop of palm trees and scrubby brush of the Texas-Mexico border evoke images of a time long past. Those thoughts hark back to an era in Rio Grande City, Texas, when the plodding of thundering hooves from the U.S. Army's 12th Calvary echoed across La Frontera in pursuit of Mexican bandits and raiders.*

Photos and story by
JOHN WAYNE LISTON

To celebrate and remember their heritage, the Rattler Battalion of Rio Grande City High School's Army Junior ROTC formed the nation's only mounted JROTC cavalry unit in 2002. Thirty young men and women dressed in replica 1922 cavalry uniforms march silently behind a covered wagon drawn by an enormous mule, while leading the way, a row of four horses and riders bear the American, Texas, unit and 12th Cavalry colors.

This is how the program represents its heritage at parades and events across Texas and as far away as the nation's capital.

The idea to start the unit in this town of about 15,000 residents that sits on the southern tip of Texas at the Mexican border surfaced in 1996 from several people, including the school board president and JROTC instructors. It was seen as way to pay homage and celebrate the traditions of the 12th Cavalry.

With school district and community support, the unit began in 1998. To embrace the city's heritage, JROTC leadership chose to have members of the mounted unit don the 1922 style of 12th Cavalry uniforms, complete with distinctive flared cavalry pants, wide-brimmed campaign hats, gauntlets, riding boots, Sam Browne belts and cavalry sabers.

"The military has always been a part of the life of Rio Grande City," said R.C. Salinas, a prominent local historian. "The community has always been supportive because they grew up together."

When then-Camp Ringgold was founded in 1848 in the heart of the current-day Rio Grande City, the land was just a transfer and supply point for the Army to support the Mexican-American War. As the camp started, so too was the city.

The 2nd Squadron, 12th Cavalry was headquartered at Fort Ringgold from 1921–41. The unit patrolled the border with Mexican Federales from Ciudad Miguel Aleman, protecting the citizens of the Rio Grande Valley from the violence of cross-border raids and bandits.

The unit exists today, having traded in its horses for M1A2 SEP tanks, Humvees and armored personnel carriers and is assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division stationed at Fort Hood.

"My great-grandfather served in the 12th Cavalry when it was stationed at Fort Ringgold," Rio Grande Cadet Ruby Perez said. "He always talked about it. Before he died, he got to see me in this uniform and to continue doing this now makes me feel a great connection to him. I think it would make him happy."

For several years, the JROTC mounted unit marched and performed dismounted until horses were acquired in 2002.

Eloy Rodriguez was hired by the school as the first horse wrangler for the unit. As a wrangler, Rodriguez, is the primary caretaker of the animals. He took on the first task of finding the right horses with the right temperament for the team.

"You can't get too young or high-spirited animals," he said. "They got to be able to handle the noise and crowds of a parade."

When the horses were first purchased, Rodriguez cared for them at his ranch.

Now the horses are stabled at the school in a clean, well-kept stable with a large pasture/training area. Care and feeding of the animals is shared between Rodriguez and the Cadets as their school schedules permit.

"We've had great support from the school board and administration. They gave me everything I needed to properly care for these animals," Rodriguez said.

A second horse wrangler, Omar Saenz, and two volunteers from the school transportation department were brought in to help with day-to-day activities and at events. The wranglers spend considerable time teaching the Cadets about working with and around horses, their needs and the proper care of the animals that weigh more than 1,200 pounds each.

The unit now has four horses – Junior, Jocy, Estrellita and Gilbert. They also have a large mule, George, to pull the wagon.

Having the ability to get the students to work with the horses has helped with their JROTC training.

"It has helped getting the kids to believe in themselves," said retired Maj. David Rutledge, Rio Grande's senior Army instructor. "Some of them see these large animals and don't believe they can do it. When they leave here, they can see in themselves just how much they are capable of."

George the mule uses his size and strength to pull the wagon of the 12th Cavalry commanded by Cadet Roel Ruiz, with Cadet Prisma Hinojosa sitting in the rifle seat and Cadet Mark Aguilar in the back.

Some Cadets admit to being nervous when they first come in contact with the horses. But they quickly overcome it.

"This taught me to learn how to control myself and my horse and not show fear," Cadet Stacey Muñoz said. "It really taught me self-confidence."

Retired Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez is the former commander of the coalition of ground forces in the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and a Rattler Battalion alumnus. He said the JROTC program goes a long way in helping Cadets obtain vital knowledge of the past.

"This program helps these Cadets and their community understand where we came from and the sacrifices it takes to preserve our freedom," Sanchez said. "There is a tremendous linkage built between their Hispanic heritage and their American roots by knowing the history of this area. It really builds their sense of patriotism."

The students have come to grasp the idea that knowing about the past and showcasing it for the world is meaningful. During a recent tour of Fort Ringold's Robert E. Lee House, Cadets were able to look at museum pieces and photographs of the original unit.

"This really sparks me, it makes me proud of what we are doing," Cadet Adan Guerra said. "It makes me proud to live here."

The Cadets have developed a love for the 12th Cavalry Memorial unit, said retired Master Sgt. Marco Peña, a Rio Grande instructor.

"I had one student last year postpone a trip to a prospective college," he said. "She told me, 'I want to be here. I'm not going to be able to do this forever so I want to enjoy it while I can, because once I graduate, its over.' "

The unit is just one part of the battalion. The Cadets still take part in the same curriculum and activities as other JROTC Cadets across the country. The battalion has 90 Cadets currently, with 30 taking part in the 12th Cavalry Memorial Unit.

"We just raised the bar one step higher for them," Peña said. "Not only do these Cadets have to account for themselves and all the additional equipment, but now they have to be responsible for a living, breathing 1,200-pound animal. Not every Cadet in the United States gets to do that."

Cadets start out volunteering for the dismounted unit. When they show dedication to the team, they get the opportunity for leadership, first as commanding the dismounted unit, then on the wagon and eventually through hard work and perseverance, to the mounted color guard.

The unit has been in parades and events around Texas. It was even invited to participate in the 2005 National Cherry Blossom Parade in Washington D.C.

During their appearances, the unit follows their mounted color guard and mule-drawn wagon with a dismounted drill demonstration featuring drill maneuvers patterned after Peña's tank formations, with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion 67th Armor (Death Dealers), 1st Tiger Brigade, 2nd Armored Division.

"We used all of these formations during the liberation of Kuwait. It brings them a real-world situation and gives meaning to the drill for these Cadets," he said.

Cadets and instructors continue to look for other opportunities to showcase their unit and hope to one day show in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

"Our kids don't necessarily have the resources to see what's out there and travel all over," Rutledge said. "That's the beauty of the Army and taking them to all these events. When you get out and see the world, you get to realize it's a really big world filled with lots of opportunities."

# Comprehensive Soldier Fitness

In this era of sustained conflict, the Army has committed itself to ensuring its people – Soldiers, civilians, family members and soon-to-be commissioned leaders – are equipped to handle challenges posed by potentially trying times.

Through a holistic approach, the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program uses individual assessments, tailored virtual training, classroom training and embedded resilience experts to allow people to maximize their potential and face the physical and psychological obstacles. The program, launched in October 2009, serves as a prevention model that is aimed at the entire force to enhance resilience and coping skills that enable them to grow and thrive in today's Army.

The Army has developed a training program to teach resiliency. Cadet Command has partnered with Army Community Services to educate those in the organization.

Comprehensive Soldier Fitness is built on 30 years of science and based on how to think rather than on what to think. It focuses on five areas:

◀ **Physical** Performing and excelling in physical activities that require aerobic fitness, endurance, strength, healthy body composition and flexibility derived through exercise, nutrition and training.

▲ **Family** Being part of a family unit that is safe, supportive and loving and provides the resources for all members to live in a healthy and secure environment.

An overview with detailed information on the program is available at
**http://www.army.mil/csf**

▲ **Social** Developing and maintaining trusted, valued relationships and friendships that are personally fulfilling and foster good communication, including a comfortable exchange of ideas, views and experiences.

▲ **Spiritual** Strengthening a set of beliefs, principles or values that sustain a person beyond family, institutional and societal sources of strength.

▲ **Emotional** Approaching life's challenges in a positive, optimistic way by demonstrating self-control, stamina and good character with your choices and actions.



# Cadet Spotlight

A quarterly look at some of ROTC's future leaders who are already making an impact on their campuses.

Last fall, Cadet Catherine O'Brien was the first female to serve as the Cadet battalion commander of the Embry-Riddle Army ROTC program. She also was the first Stetson University student to hold that position since the school became an Embry-Riddle partner in 1991.

**Hometown**
Edgewater, Fla.
**Major**
Sports management, minor in general business
**Grade Point Average**
3.803
**ROTC Activities**
Served as the Cadet battalion in the fall 2010 semester. Currently the battalion S1. Previously has been part of the program's color guard and Ranger Challenge teams.
**Other Activities**
Various intramural sports
CrossFit level 1 certified instructor and competitor
**Branch**
Medical services

**What motivates you to become an Army officer?**
According to statistics, less than 1 percent of the U.S. population serves in the armed forces, and I believe the best way to give back to your country is to serve for it. By becoming an Army officer, I will have the chance to become a part of one of the most elite organizations in the world. I will be able to give back to my country for the freedom it gives me.

**What impact has ROTC had on you?**
ROTC has completely changed the way I live my life, and it has given me the opportunity to do things that I would never have been able to do if I were in any other organization. Taking that first step and joining ROTC has been one of the best decisions of my life.

Photo courtesy of Stetson University, photographer Joel Jones.

**Cadet Yvette Zurita is the battalion commander of the Rio Grande City High School Junior ROTC Rattler Battalion in Rio Grande City, Texas. The battalion is the home of 12th Cavalry Memorial Unit, the only mounted JROTC unit in the nation.** *Photo by John Wayne Liston*