

Cadet of the Year

C/Col Ryan K. Chapman



Recognized by the Air Force Association, the CAP Cadet of the Year must demonstrate outstanding leadership in CAP as well as academic excellence. The nominee must have earned the Amelia Earhart Award and be a current CAP member. The Cadet of the Year receives a one-year membership in AFA and a commemorative plaque.

Over the past three years, the Connecticut Wing's **Cadet, Colonel Ryan K. Chapman** has commanded not one, but two cadet programs — in the community-based 399th Composite Squadron at Danbury Municipal Airport and the school-based 801st Cadet Squadron at New Fairfield High School. His leadership in the 399th helped grow the squadron's program from a handful of active cadets to two full flights, and he inspired others to achieve, resulting in a Wing record for the number of cadets simultaneously receiving the General Billy Mitchell Award. Meanwhile, the unit won the Squadron of Merit for best cadet program in the Wing.

In the newly formed 801st Cadet Squadron, Cadet Chapman helped recruit the first cadre of cadets and found himself in the role of cadet program teacher to the unit's senior member, who was new to CAP. When that senior member took a four-month paternity leave, Cadet Chapman single-handedly held the fledgling unit together. Under his watch, the new squadron saw not only membership increase but also its members excel. Thanks to this remarkable achievement, he became the only junior at New Fairfield High School to receive the Principal's Leadership Award.

At school, Cadet Chapman succeeded in both academics, placing in the top tenth of his class in the school's most rigorous course load, and in athletics, participating in three varsity-level sports, serving as team captain of two varsity sports, and even competing at the national level in track and field. In CAP, he recently earned the General Carl A. Spaatz Award, CAP's highest cadet honor, and he served as Wing representative to the Northeast Region Cadet Advisory Council. In 2010, he traveled to Australia as part of the International Air Cadet Exchange program. He has completed numerous emergency services qualifications, earned his solo wings at Glider Encampment, and graduated from National Cadet Officer School, from four Hawk Mountain Ranger School programs, and from both the Basic and Advanced Pararescue Orientation Courses. His ground team was credited in 2009 with a nondistress find of an electronic locator transmitter on a fishing vessel, and in 2011 he provided leadership in CAP's disaster relief efforts after a tornado struck Connecticut.

Cadet Chapman's pursuit of excellence resulted in his receiving Congressional nominations to the US Naval Academy and the US Air Force Academy prior to accepting an early appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point, where he is a member of the Class of 2015.