

# Atten-**HUT!**

## NCC Showcases Top CAP Cadets

“O rder ARMS!”

“Right FACE – left FACE – about FACE!”

“Spike it, spike it!”

“On your mark, get set, GO!”

If it sounds hectic, it was for nearly 200 cadets who recently took part in Civil Air Patrol’s 2006 National Cadet Competition in Virginia.

Sixteen teams from eight regions gathered to vie for the best color guard and drill teams in CAP and to compete in many other areas.

Winning took a lot more than inspiration for the cadets who competed in drill and color guard as well as quizzes, volleyball and running.

The clatter of half-step marches, the slams of volleyballs and the gasps of cadets completing a mile-run made up just part of the excitement.

But, making it to NCC first required surviving com-



Color guard cadets from left, Austin Jeanneret, Caitlin Mueller, Brian Weber and Dennis McFadden III of the Illinois Wingmarch are shown in formation outside Town Hall in downtown Herndon, Va.

petition at the squadron, wing and region levels.

In the end, a Pacific Region team from California won the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Sweepstakes Trophy for the color guard team, while an Arizona contingent took the Sweepstakes Trophy for the drill team.

The competition brought sweat and tears for participants like Toni Christen of the Washington Wing.

“My team’s been through a lot. We’ve been staying up every night polishing shoes. We stayed up until two in the morning last night getting ready for inspection. It’s really stressful and we’re working hard, but it’s good to meet the other cadets,” she said.

Christen, an experienced marcher and aspir-

ing officer who wants to fly helicopters in the U.S. military, said concentration was one of the greatest challenges she faced in the competition because one slip of the foot can spell disaster. Turning the wrong way, she said, was her worst fear during her team’s showing at the National Air and Space Museum’s Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Washington Dulles International Airport.

The youths also had to come prepared to show their knowledge, answering questions like:

The competition includes drills that emphasize proper handling of the U.S. flag.



Excelling at National Cadet Competition stretches beyond cadence calls and ceremony. Here, cadets participate in what is for many a grueling one-mile run.

Photos by Marc Huchette, National Headquarters





- What three factors shape experience?
- In mythology, who flew closest to the sun? and
- What is the photosphere?

Cadets began studying CAP aerospace textbooks months in advance, said Michael Piazza, a New Hampshire Wing member who actually lives in Maine.

“We practiced, we pulled questions out of books, we made up our own questions, and we did constant quiz bowling at the squadron,” he said.

“Every chance we got we were doing that or drill practice. We’d practice our innovative drill or quiz bowl drill, then our innovative and quiz bowl, back and forth,” said Piazza, whose brother, Robert, is also a cadet.

Piazza said the practices began in January and were held three times a week, but his peers knew other teams that started preparing before then.

That preparation evidenced itself on the final and perhaps most rigorous day of the competition with a mile run in downtown Herndon, Va., followed by volleyball matches.

While color guards competed at raising, lowering and

carrying flags during drills that tested the proper retirement of colors, dozens of other cadets like Phillip Guisti of the New York Wing met near Town Hall to begin the race.

“I wanted to go (run) under six minutes, and I accomplished that. It felt great,” Guisti said.

By afternoon, after teams had belted out as much volleyball as their sinews would allow, rest had come.

The evening was for celebration, one highlighted by a speech from Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael Peterson, chief of warfighting integration and chief information officer for the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force at the Pentagon.

Peterson, whose home is Biloxi, Miss., said he knows CAP intimately because cadets helped family and friends of his last year when Hurricane Katrina swamped the state.

“You’ve chosen a path that will lead you to success. You are different. You have made a choice that will matter for the rest of your lives,” Peterson told cadets, many of whom would go home, hoping for another shot at glory at next year’s national competition. ▲