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'Camp Success 10' fosters teamwork, builds youth confidence

By David San Miguel

Fort A.P. Hill Public Affairs Office

More than 500 Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from within a tri-state region converged at Fort A.P. Hill to participate in their annual JROTC Cadet Leadership Challenge, June 23-28.

During their six-day-long summer camp, the 523 cadets were exposed to an intense training regiment which began each day at 5 a.m. with a wake-up call and concluded at 10 p.m. with "lights out".

Rotating through each training phase by company, the cadets underwent survival, drown proof and safety instruction followed by runs through land navigation, rappelling and confidence courses.

Part of the 20-plus cadre staff that facilitated the program, 1st Sgt. (U.S. Army retired) Christopher P. Lee, Thomas Edison High School, Alexandria, Va., said the cadets came from various high schools in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

"The cadets came here to learn not only how to survive, but to build up their confidence and self-esteem," he said. They learn to take responsibility for their actions, support their teammates and to step up, take charge and lead.

Cadet Jourdan Ginyard, Forestville Military Academy, Prince George County, Md., further explained.

"Here, we're learning a lot about Army leadership and other activities," he said. "We're learning to become a unit and to make new friends."

"For some of the cadets, it's been an eye-opener," commented Col. (U.S. Army retired) Martin Compton, cadre staff member, Wintersville High School, Westminster, Md. He explained that many of the cadets are accustomed to competing on an individual basis and not as a "unit".

"Here, the cadets built relationships, developed cohesive units and worked as teams," Compton said.

Teamwork, the cadets learned, was key to successfully negotiating the Leaders Reaction Course or in keeping the barracks clean and ready for unannounced inspections, he said.

For some cadets, the military regiment seemed a little much.

"Waking up early ... having little time to eat ... I just wanted to get a taste of what it's like to be in the military," added Cadet Jamelle S. Marshall, Parkdale High School, Riverdale, Md. "It's been fun, but I don't think I'd like to join."

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Cadre staff member, Lt. Col. (U.S. Army retired) Victor W. Burnett, said the program gives the cadets only a glimpse of what serving in today's military is like.

"What they learn at summer camp builds on that experience," he said. It offers the cadre a great way to select students to serve in leadership roles and positions ... and it also lets us see how we stack up against the other schools.

Despite the heat, the dirt and the many cuts and bruises suffered while negotiating the rappel tower or running through the obstacle course, there were some who relished making new friends, and the opportunity to test their mental and physical limitations.

Cadet Kate P. Frenz, Magruder High School, Derwood, Md., who decided late into her junior year to join the JROTC program, was one such cadet.

"The JROTC program is very structured and I like that," she said. "I like the discipline and I think I'd like to pursue a military career."

At the week's conclusion, former graduate of the JCLC experience, Senior Cadet Gerald Foster III, Norwich University, Northfield, Vt., offered the cadets some final words of advice.

"Life," he said, "will present you with many challenges. Look at these challenges as a test and think positive. It's how you deal with issues that will make you successful."

He said that if you can dream it, you can achieve it.