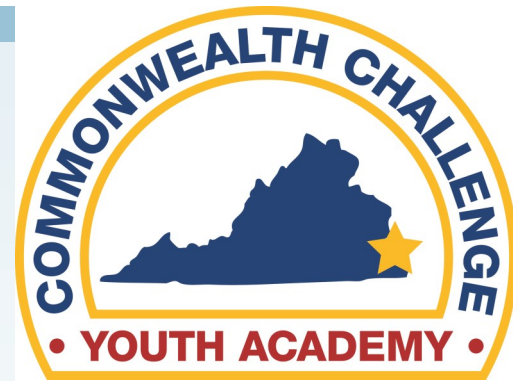


Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy
253 C Street, Camp Pendleton
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
www.vachallenge.org

November 2015
Class 44, Issue 1



Challenge Courier

A Message from our Director

By: E. Mark Chicoine, Director

Dear Educators,

Thank-you for letting me take the time to introduce you to the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy.

The objective of the Commonwealth Challenge program, sponsored by the Virginia National Guard, is to intervene in the lives of 16-18 year old teenagers by providing the values, skills, education, and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens, and to do so in a highly structured learning environment.

During the residential phase of our program, the Cadets will complete the eight core components, which are: academic excellence, life coping skills, job skills, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, service to the community, leadership/followership, and physical fitness.

The Cadets will receive additional instruction in patriotism, community living, drug and alcohol abuse awareness and team building that is geared toward developing respect for both community and society. Academically, all Cadets work toward attaining their GEDs, or if eligible, participate in our credit recovery curriculum so that they can return to their High Schools and complete their High School Diplomas.

Upon graduating from the residential phase of our program, Cadets will enter a twelve month post-residential phase where they will continue to work with their Challenge career counselor and their mentor on placement opportunities. During this phase, Cadets are required to be enrolled in high school or an institution of higher education such as college or trade school, be successfully employed for 30 hours or more per week, or join the military. Both the mentor and all of the Challenge staff are ready and prepared to assist the Cadets with placement.

Lastly, we look forward to working with you and your students to help guide them towards a successful future as productive citizens. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any member of the Commonwealth Challenge staff at any time.

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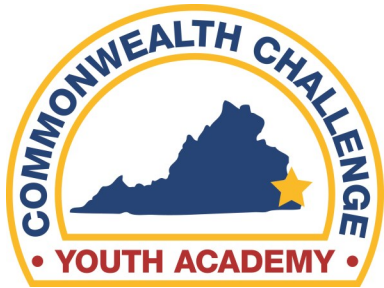
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- A Message from our Director
- Changes to Challenge Academics
- Why Mentoring?
- An explanation of our Art Therapy Services.



Dream.
★ Believe.
Achieve.



ChalleNge Academics Push Cadets to Excellence

By: Angela Coleman, Principal

Commonwealth ChalleNge Youth Academy (CCYA) is excited to have you as a potential partner with our program! Our school provides rigorous **high school instruction**. Core teachers are certified with the Virginia Department of Education (VADOE).



We offer two academic tracks for our Cadets. The first is the General Educational Development (GED) program. GEDs are offered through the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP).

In addition to the GED program, qualified cadets may obtain Virginia approved high school credits through our credit recovery program. This program uses our virtual learning product – Edgenuity. Teachers provide instruction using all teaching modalities to engage cadets in meaningful activities ensuring readiness for GED testing or Standards of Learning (SOL) driven high school credits.

Our goal is to hone their ability to learn. Cadets are administered a pre- and post - Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment to measure progress during the program.

Special education, when needed, is provided in an inclusion model, and we provide individualized instruction/self-contained instruction according to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) guidelines. Identified accommodations, supplementary aids and services, supports in general education and/or special education programs, or modifications to the general curriculum are implemented daily, across all settings, and for the duration of the participation in the CCYA

program.

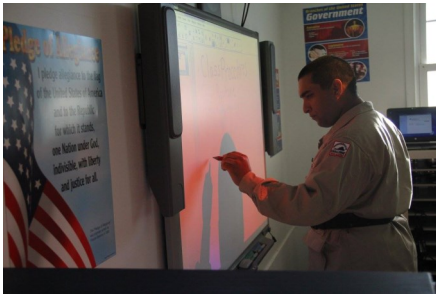
Needed accommodations are requested and implemented during GED and SOL testing. GED testing is administered at local approved testing centers. SOL testing is requested and administered with the Local Education Agency (LEA) – the public schools in most instances.

In addition to academics, our program offers extracurricular activities in soccer, basketball, archery, IT club, science club, and the student council association.

These activities are secondary to academics and positive interactions in the residential program. Cadets failing to adhere to program requirements are not allowed to participate in the above activities.

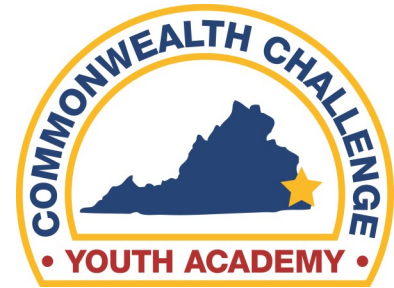
Tutoring is provided daily and during the weekends. Cadets are encouraged to utilize this additional opportunity to obtain subject mastery. Homework is assigned daily with students being responsible for completion daily during evening study time in the barracks.

Our program has a vast array of options to meet any cadet's needs. The most important element is a willingness to take advantage of the learning opportunities provided. Best wishes; we look forward to preparing cadets for the transition from GED or high school to life-long learning and productive citizenry.





Candidates during their Traditional Road March, just before becoming Cadets in Class 44.



Mentoring Vital to Cadet Achievement

My name is Mr. Myron James, and I am the Mentor Coordinator for the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy. I have been with the Academy since September 1994, starting as a Military Instructor (Cadre/ATC) and Post-Residential Coordinator.

Mentoring is vital for the success of Challenge. Mentoring sustains and supports the cadet's continued practice of productive habits attained in the residential phase of Challenge.

The mentoring program for Challenge involves recruiting, screening, training and matching the qualified mentor with the cadet prior to the 13th week of the residential phase. I travel throughout the State with the Challenge Admissions Team to brief the parents of potential cadets on the importance of mentoring, answer questions about mentor qualifications, provide initial training to mentors, and gather information needed to conduct background checks. Mentors are screened for suitability to work with cadets. The screening process involves an agreement to participate in the program for 17 months and agreeing to a background check which includes a fingerprint check through the Virginia State Police and FBI and a search through the Department of Social Services.

Mentors receive two forms of training during the residential phase. The initial mentor training must be conducted prior to the cadet and mentor being matched. This training is mandatory and is conducted on-site or off-site and can last up to four hours. Verification of documentation needed to complete the mentor screening is included in the itinerary for the class. Training classes are in conjunction with the Academy's Open Houses and residential passes. A mentor workshop is also scheduled for February 20, 2016.

Mentor visits are encouraged during the residential phase, as well as at least two "face-to-face" meetings with the cadets during the post-residential phase.

I can be contacted via email at mjames@vachallenge.org or at 757-491-5932, ext. 240.

Know someone interested in the program? If so, have them attend an Open House! Open Houses are located at Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach. The GPS Address for Camp Pendleton is **1152 S. Birdneck Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23451.**

Saturday, October 31st, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, November 21st, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, December 19th, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Friday, January 8th, 2016 at 2:00 PM

Saturday, January 30th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Friday, February 12th, 2016 at 2:00 PM

Saturday, February 27th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, March 12th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Please call Admissions at 757-491-5932 to schedule an Open House.

Art Therapy Encourages Creative Emotional Expression

By: Eileen Douglas, Lead Counselor and Art Therapist

During the residential phase at Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy, Cadets have the opportunity to participate in individual and group art therapy sessions. Art therapy is a mental health profession in which cadets use art supplies, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to explore feelings, emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage behavior, develop social skills, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem.

The benefits of art therapy are often broken down into two aspects:

1. The physical process of art making, which itself can be a therapeutic experience
2. The art product, which may provide insight into a cadet's thoughts, beliefs, and concerns

Commonwealth ChalleNGe's art therapy program emphasizes core themes over the 22-week residential phase, including: Emotional Awareness and Management, Adjusting to ChalleNGe, Communication, Interpersonal Relationships, Preparing for life outside of ChalleNGe, Acknowledging and building personal strengths, Goal Setting and our Eight Core Components.

A typical art therapy group will begin with a review of group expectations, emphasizing mutual support and respect for everyone present as well as the art making process and the art materials. Cadets are introduced to a theme and create an art project relating to that topic. Groups end with clean-up and sharing, in which cadets take responsibility for their supplies and communicate about their emotions and the resulting projects.

Art therapy projects may be completed in one session or over the course of multiple sessions. Projects completed by previous classes include plaster masks, anti-bully posters, a "Tapestry of Tolerance" constructed from individual pieces of paper designed by each cadet representing their unique backgrounds and beliefs, and a wall of strength built by individual cadet "bricks" representing their personal strengths.

Class 44 is on their way to creating many creative and expressive projects!

For more information about art therapy visit www.arttherapy.org

Follow us on Social Media!

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Instagram: @vachallenge

Snapchat: vachallenge



Virginia
Commonwealth ChalleNGe
Youth Academy

