

# Embrace the Challenge . . .



Giving Virginia teens  
a second chance!





## ChalleNGe Success & Community Impact

The full impact of the Academy is best seen through the eyes and stories of cadets who have completed the program. The structure and focus on the Eight Core Components has a transformational quality on the lives of cadets who meet the rigorous demands and successfully complete the program.

- Almost 4,000 cadets have graduated from Commonwealth ChalleNGe since 1994.
- 65% of cadets earn their GED's
- 18% of graduates continue their education
- 2% of graduates enter the military
- 80% of graduates join the workforce

Moreover, graduates of the Academy say the program has changed their attitudes about themselves and their outlook on the future. Many graduates have been successfully serving in the military, are gainfully employed, or are enrolled in a two or four year higher education institution.

## About the Academy

Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy is a Positive Youth Development Program that targets youth who are at greatest risk for dropping out of high school. The Academy is one of 34 Challenge's nationwide that provides a unique, non-traditional learning environment for high school students who have not been successful in a traditional school setting. Challenge is a recognized Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) program. As ISAEP recognized program, Challenge has the opportunity to give the students a second chance to complete their high school education and possibly earn a viable credential, the GED.

Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy provides a disciplined and structured environment that fosters academic achievement, personal growth and development, physical training and enhanced self-esteem. As a voluntary program, Challenge strives to develop life skills, educational levels and future employment potential while instilling the highest moral and ethical standards in our students. Each cadet is supported by a mentor that encourages and supports them throughout the program.



## ChalleNGe Phases

**Phase I** - Five month residential component at the State Military Reservation (SMR), Camp Pendleton in Virginia Beach, VA. The residential phase systematically builds the self-esteem and self-discipline of the participant through Eight Core Components (life coping skills, academic excellence, physical fitness, health/hygiene, job skills, leadership/followership, responsible citizenship and service to community ). Cadets also work with staff to arrange a post-residential placement which includes employment, education, military service or volunteer service.

**Phase II** - 12 month Post-residential component begins when graduates return to their communities to begin their placement plan, whether it is pursuing higher education, joining the military, explore job/career opportunities, begin employment or conduct approved volunteer work. The cadets' mentor will help with the transition while continuing to serve as role models, advisors and advocates for the entire year.

## ChalleNGe Enrollment Process

**Applicants considering enrollment in the program must meet the following eligibility requirements:**

- Be between the ages of 16 - 18 years old on the first day of program
- A high school dropout or at risk of dropping out or being expelled from high school
- A resident of the state of Virginia and U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Free of any felony charges, convictions or indictments
- A willing volunteer
- Physically and mentally capable

**If the above requirements are met, then:**

- Complete and mail the cadet application
- Select a mentor and mail mentor application package
- Participate in mandatory pre-registration meeting (schedule will be posted at [www.vachallenge.org](http://www.vachallenge.org) and on facebook)
- Attend in-processing at the State Military Reservation, Camp Pendleton on the assigned date



## **Mentors Role/Commitment**

All cadets are required to have a mentor throughout their participation in the 18 month program. The role of the mentor is an essential component in the experience and success of the cadet in the program. A mentor is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher; an influential senior sponsor or supporter for the participant. He or she echoes the positive values of parents and ChalleNGe staff and are committed to helping their mentee discover their strengths and achieve their goals.

### **Mentor Eligibility Requirements:**

- Must be same gender as cadet
- 21 years of age or older
- Not an immediate family member
- Complete a mentor application and submit to a background check

### **Mentor Commitment:**

- Attends mentor training at Commonwealth ChalleNGe or during pre-registration events .
- 18 months of uninterrupted contact with cadet
- Keeps in contact with cadet by mail during the residential phase
- Weekly contact and personal meetings with cadet during the Post-residential phase
- Monthly communication with the Commonwealth ChalleNGe Post-residential staff

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

**Is there a cost to the parent or legal guardian?**

**No.** The Academy enrollment is free, parents are not required to pay tuition or other costs associated with the program. However, clothing and other items have to be purchased by the parent or legal guardian.

**What ages do you accept?**

Applicants must be between 16 and 18 years of age on day 1 of the start of the program; 18 year old applicants may turn 19 before the completion of the residential phase.

**How often do you have enrollment?**

Pre-registration is held several times throughout the year for January and July classes. We advise early enrollment because there is a maximum number of cadet slots available.

**Will cadets receive a GED or high school diploma?**

Cadets will not earn a high school diploma, but because Challenge is an ISAEP program, the cadets will work towards obtaining a General Educational Development (GED) Credential.

\* Applications for cadets and mentors are available online at:  
[www.vachallenge.org](http://www.vachallenge.org)

Or **call**, or **email** ChalleNGe and request that an application be mailed to you:

Mrs. Latreece Strong  
Admissions  
(757) 491-5932 Ext. 254  
(800) 796-6472 Ext. 254  
[lstrong@vachallenge.org](mailto:lstrong@vachallenge.org)

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**COMPLETED APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MAILED TO:**

Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy  
253 C Street  
Camp Pendleton  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

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**To find us**

**Click on** the [MAP to Commonwealth Youth ChalleNGe Academy](#) link and allow the map to load.

1. **For directions:**  
*Type in your address* in the upper left hand corner
2. **To see details** of our street address:  
Please *use the "zoom in"* feature of the map in the lower right corner