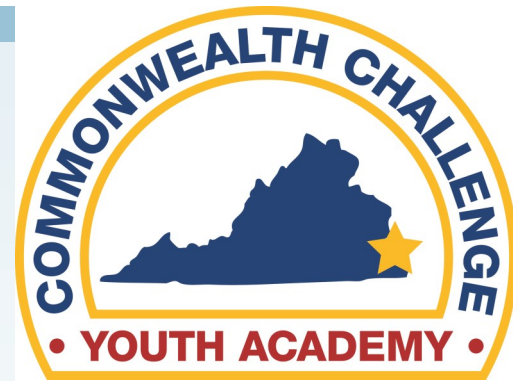


Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy  
253 C Street, Camp Pendleton  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451  
www.vachallenge.org

April 2016  
Class 45, Issue 1



# Challenge Courier

## Commonwealth Challenge Class 44 Graduates; Class 45 Progresses to Residential Phase

By: Alex Dye, Admissions and Public Affairs

CAMP PENDLETON, VA.— One Class in, and another Class out. Class 44 graduated during a ceremony at Ocean Lakes High School on March 5, 2016. 105 Cadets graduated, and now move into the Post-Residential phase, where they will continue their education, move into the workforce or enlist in the military, with guidance from a Mentor of their choosing.

Cadet Melone, from Ashburn, Va., was named Class 44's Distinguished Honor Graduate. Cadet Williams, K., from Danville, Va. was named Valedictorian.

The latest Class of Commonwealth Challenge Candidates transitioned to Cadets during a ceremony on April 7, 2016. Class 45 enrolled 135 Cadets to begin the Residential and academic portion of the program.

Candidates completed a rigorous two week long Acclimation period in order to become Candidates. During Acclimation, Candidates were subjected to physical, mental and leadership challenges, in order to prove their readiness to be Cadets. Candidates also became aware of the high standards and expectations Cadets are required to meet, in order to graduate.

Now that our Candidates have moved on to becoming Cadets, they will take on another title at Challenge: Students. Class 45 began academics on Monday, April 11, 2016. Cadets are split up in Platoons by gender, as well as by GED or Credit Recovery track. Cadets can either earn their GED, or recover up to 5-7 high school credits, by completing the Residential Phase.

All Credit Recovery students will take Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) approved courses through Edgenuity.

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. Challenge is a 17 and a half month program designed to promote academics, leadership and followership, physical fitness, life coping skills, job skills, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship and community service.

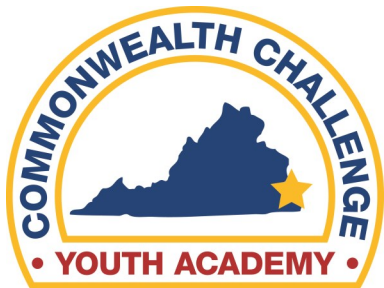


*Cadet Melone, Ashburn, Va. was named Class 44's Distinguished Honor Graduate.*



*Candidates participate in Obstacle Courses during Acclimation Phase, in order to build teamwork and self-confidence.*





## ChalleNGe Resource Instructors Provide One on One Support for Cadets in Need

By: Lillie Lindsay, M.A., Resource Teacher

Greetings fellow educators and supporters of ChalleNGe! My name is Lillie Lindsay, Resource Teacher at Commonwealth Challenge. To give you a bit of perspective on what I do for our Cadets, I will show you what support has meant to me.

It was my father's destiny to become a World-Class Scientist. He talked to my oldest sister as if she were a Harvard educated physician. He communicated with me as if I were a master teacher. When talking to my sister, it was as if she was a fellow scientist. My brother was treated as if he were a mobility expert and my little brother, was regarded as one who controlled billions on Wall Street. That is what we became. My father learned that words held the power to propel one's destiny.

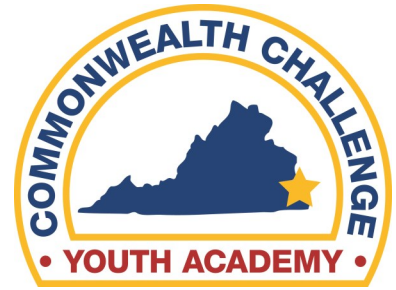
In my career as a Special Educator, I was awarded a full-fellowship by the United States Department of Education. It paid me to complete graduate studies and the cost of tuition and fees. After working two years in one the most exclusive schools in Virginia Beach, I joined the United States Peace Corps. Joining the Peace Corps was my way in which service could be provided since much was given. At the close of my service, I was selected to represent the United States Peace Corps in a ten-million dollar recruitment campaign. This included posters, billboards, a web-enabled site, magazine advertisements, and televised public service announcements nationwide. There were five of us selected from a pool of 125,000 for these honors. My role was to represent the education sector for this federal agency.

My role at Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy is to provide resource services to the Corps of Cadets. My terminal objective is to provide support services to learners within the classroom environment. One-On-One support services are offered daily in the upper deck of our education

building. We accommodate IEPs and 504 Plans, and support is provided for credit recovery and GED mission focused cadets. When you put in the hard work, then you will know success. My desire is for my words to propel you towards your greater purpose!







*Candidates during their Traditional Road March, just before becoming Cadets in Class 45.*

## Career Counseling Services Aim to Find Cadets' "Wow" Factors in Job Search

By: William Caruso, Career Counselor

Hello, fellow educators! My name is William Caruso, and I work with 16 to 18 year old Cadets to help with academic placements, job referrals, introductions to military recruiters, interview skills and much more.

My main focus is helping with information based on the interests of trade and higher education pursuits, as well as job guidance based on enthusiasm for future employment. The Challenge Career Counseling Department works to improve Cadet communication skills, mock interviews skills, resume writing skills and interpersonal skills with potential employers.

We try to add fun to the process of making better employees by filming their interview skills, and talking about the positives, as well as what the improvement can be made in the interview. My goal as a Career Counselor is to help each Cadet develop what I call their "wow" factors. For example, if an individual is a great writer, tech-savvy, or has a particular skill, I encourage development of those skills, as they will be invaluable assets in an employment search.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter article, we schedule a large Career Fair towards the end of each Class. Our most recent Fair took place at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, and involved dozens of companies, who recruit in the Hampton Roads area, as well as at the State and National levels. Our goal is to continue expanding on the number of attendees, so our Cadets have more exposure to employment opportunities.

We help each Cadet work towards their future while at Challenge. In turn, there is less stress for parents throughout developmental transitions, and more young adults prepared to enter the work force, leading the Commonwealth of Virginia to becoming a place of stronger community.

Know a student or parent 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, April 30th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, May 21st, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, June 18th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Saturday, July 23rd, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Friday, August 19th, 2016 at 2:30PM

Thursday, September 1st, 2016 at 3:00 PM

Saturday, September 17th, 2016 at 10:00 AM

Friday, September 22nd, 2016 at 2:30 PM

**Please call Admissions at 757-491-5932 to schedule an Open House. Our next Class**

***begins October 3rd, 2016.***

# Challenge Operations Ensure Cadet Safety is a Top Priority

By: Maj. Marcus Brooks, Commandant

Fellow educators: I am the Commandant of the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy. I have been with the organization since 2007. I started at Commonwealth Challenge as a cadre, which we refer to it today as an A.T.A.C. officer (Assistant Teach Assist and Counsel). I have a B.S. in Criminal Justice and after working here I pursued and completed my Master degree, M.S. in Human Services w/ concentration in Marriage and Family Counseling. I am currently pursuing an additional M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy for my Licensure.

My responsibility is the oversight of the day to day operations of the Academy. With the oversight of this program comes a number of responsibilities. The most important responsibility I have been tasked with is the welfare and safety of the cadets in our care. Part of the safety and security is to make sure the cadets who attend our program are properly supervised at all times. I make sure the men and women (A.T.A.C. officers) who care for these cadets are providing the teenagers with discipline and structure they may be missing. I assure the discipline and structure used for behavior modification is done in a positive way. The staff I am responsible for uses military-style structure when dealing with the cadets.

I am also responsible for making sure the staff who works for me knows how to reach other resources within the program to help a cadet with any issues that may be beyond the A.T.A.C. officer's scope. Upper management and I sit down together and put together a day to day plan, and I am tasked with making sure these plans are carried out. We are a very structured program, and I make sure that standards are being met or exceeded. As I am responsible for 37 staff members, my duties are making sure they are carrying out theirs.



Below is a schedule of upcoming events for Challenge Cadets:

## **APRIL**

22: Field Trip— Marching at Tattoo Event

23: Field Trip— Transportation Museum

30: Field Trip— Casemate Museum

## **MAY**

11: Field Trip— Monticello

16: 1st Round of Silver Phase

23: Cadet Awards Assembly

26— June 1: First Pass Home

## **JUNE**

1-5: Challenge Invitational

11/18: Field Trip— American Rover

18: Mentor Day

25/26: Rappel Tower

30: 1st Round of Gold Phase



*An ATAC officer greets a Cadet's family at Family Day.*



*Cadets meet Governor Terry McAuliffe and the First Lady of Virginia.*

Follow us on Social Media!

Facebook: Commonwealth ChalleNGe

Twitter: @ChallengeVA

Instagram: @vachallenge

Snapchat: vachallenge



**Commonwealth ChalleNGe**  
**Youth Academy**

