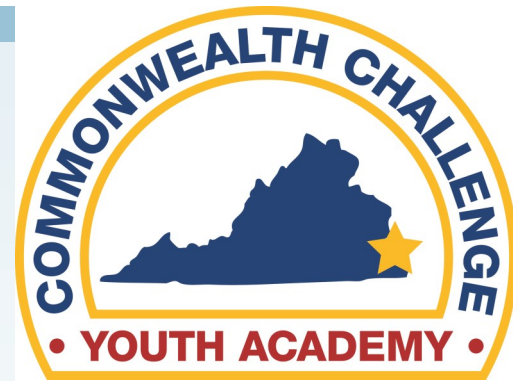


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June 2016  
Class 45, Issue 2



# Challenge Courier

## Commonwealth Challenge Hosts Annual Eastern Regional Invitational

By: Alex Dye, Admissions and Public Affairs

CAMP PENDLETON, VA.— Cadets from four National Guard Youth Challenge programs participated in a four-day academic and athletic invitational, hosted by the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy.

Commonwealth Challenge hosted cadets from the Capital Guardian Youth Challenge Academy (Washington, D.C.), New Jersey Challenge Academy, as well as the Tarheel Academy in North Carolina. Jamaica's Challenge was also invited, but was unable to make the tournament, due to a last minute scheduling conflict.

Teams from the three Challenge programs competed in soccer, softball, basketball, drill and ceremony, chess, triathlon, as well as a scholastic bowl, similar to the *Jeopardy* game show.

Tarheel Challenge won 1st place overall. New Jersey Challenge finished in 2nd, and Commonwealth Challenge came in 3rd. Commonwealth Challenge won the scholastic bowl, and came in second place in chess.

Commonwealth Challenge defeated the Capital Guardian Youth Challenge Academy in a separate invitational, two weeks prior to the Eastern Regional Invitational.

The Eastern Regional Invitational allowed Cadets from different areas of the country to meet, compete and build camaraderie among their peers. The first invitational was based around more military-style events, but has evolved to include more academic and sport activities, since Virginia began hosting the invitational in 2001.

The Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy is a 17 and a half month program, designed around a quasi-military style structure. The program promotes discipline, academics and leadership skills while improving self-esteem, pride and confidence.

The Academy operates two classes per year, one starting in March and the other in October. The program is for 16-18 year old students, and is tuition-free.

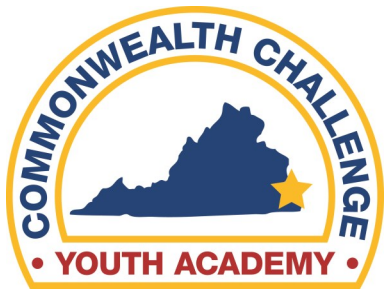


*Cadet Rowand (Petersburg, Va.) takes on a member of North Carolina's Tarheel Challenge in a chess match.*



*Cadet Bridges (Chesapeake, Va.) of Commonwealth Challenge tips off against New Jersey Challenge in male basketball.*





*Cadet Hawkins (foreground, right) stands at the ready, prior to a drill and ceremony competition against the Washington, D.C. Challenge program.*



## ChalleNGe Cadet Rises from a Tumultuous Past to Top of His Class

By: Alex Dye, Admissions and Public Affairs

CAMP PENDLETON, Va.— “I would be in jail or dead, if I wasn’t in this program, no joke.”

Hearing the past stories of Cadet Bryan Hawkins, it is easy to understand that possibility.

Cadet Hawkins, 17, from Manassas, Va. is a Silver Phase Cadet in Class 45, a leader in his platoon and succeeding in the classroom. Hawkins even earned the privilege of telling his story to future Cadets at Orientations.

That’s a long way since his days of running with a gang, being in and out of juvenile detention and watching his own brothers follow suit.

“I came from sleeping in a car, to living with my mom, to getting kicked out, going to live with my dad then getting locked up,” said Hawkins. “Being at Challenge has opened my eyes to what it means to be a successful man.”

Cadet Hawkins knew the moment was right to make a change in his life, after witnessing his 11-year old brother go into a tirade, after being arrested.

“My brother came out of a cop car, just like I did,” said Hawkins. “Running, cussing, all that stuff. I’m sitting there thinking that was me. That was the moment I felt I needed to lead by example.”

Hawkins humbled himself, and embraced the structure Challenge offered. Hawkins believes the support given at Challenge surpasses what he will get when he returns home.

“It’s nice here,” said Hawkins. “I’m taken care of. I have responsibilities, but, back home, it’s rough. Being here has opened my eyes.”

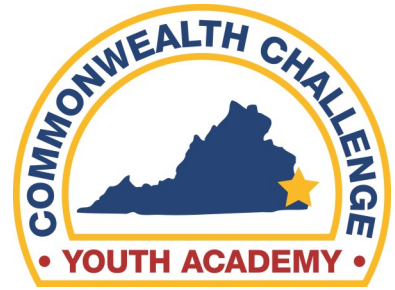
Hawkins hopes to become infantry in the Marines, after earning his GED at Commonwealth Challenge.



*Cadet Hawkins and his platoon mate, Cadet Mills (Stafford, VA., left of Hawkins) support the Commonwealth ChalleNGe basketball team at an Invitational.*



*Cadet Hawkins receives his Silver Phase certificate from Director Chicoine.*



# Faces In The Crowd



Cadet Wadsworth (right) awaits her Silver Phase award.

## Cadet Profile

*Name: Danielle Wadsworth*

*Hometown: Hopewell, Va.*

*Age: 16*

*High School: Thomas Dale*

*Challenge Platoon: 3rd*

*Q: Why did you come to Challenge?*

*A: "I was struggling in school, not keeping up with my schoolwork, failing and I saw this as an opportunity to pick myself back up, and succeed in life."*

*Q: What has Challenge taught you?*

*A: "I wasn't as independent as I used to be. I've learned that when I need help, I need to start asking for it. I've asked for help more here than at home."*

*Q: You want to join the Marines. How will Challenge help you achieve that goal?*

*A: "Being away from home now is helping me get used to it. I'm not always going to have my parents by my side, and this helps in the long run."*

*Side Note: Cadet Wadsworth earned Silver Phase in her first opportunity.*



Cadet Mills displays his Silver Phase award certificate.

## Cadet Profile

*Name: Daniellee Mills*

*Hometown: Stafford, Va.*

*Age: 17*

*High School: Mountain View*

*Challenge Platoon: 1st*

*Q: What is your message to potential future Cadets?*

*A: "Become the man you want to become. This is the place you can learn how to do it. You're not a man if your priorities aren't straight, and that's what they teach you here."*

*Q: Are there any skills Challenge has helped you develop?*

*A: "The leadership. I like speaking in front of people, Open Houses and motivating my platoon. I asked Lt. Russell (ATAC officer) for the responsibility of motivating the platoon, and to write a speech every day using the knowledge gained here. I've always been good at writing, but I never knew it."*

*Q: How will you avoid falling into your old habits after Challenge?*

*A: "I'm going to keep a strong mental mindset. I'm going to hang out with friends and family, play video games and do typical teenage stuff. Then, when I turn 18, I'm going to enlist (in the Army)."*



## Class 45 Silver Phase Cadets (as of June 6, 2016)

1st Platoon	High School	2nd Platoon	High School	3rd Platoon	High School	4th Platoon	High School
Brown, A.	Warwick	Anderson, J.	Grassfield	Armogida, A.	Vista Ridge (CO)	Barbarji, T.	Lafayette
Ensley, B.	Deep Creek	Ashlin, M.	Heritage	Green, E.	N/A	Carr, T.	Southampton
Hamilton, Da.	Broad Run	Gonzalez, W.	Dinwiddie	Wadsworth, D.	Thomas Dale	Gordon, G.	First Colonial
Hernandez, L.	Renaissance Academy	Gonzalez-Ventura, W.	Indian River	Wilson, B.	Renaissance Academy	White, B.	Cosby
Fox, T.	Bland	Hickey, T.	New Directions			DiAntonio, B.	Kellam
Hawkins, B.	New Directions	Tillman, E.	Bethel			Parker-Jones, T.	New Directions
Mitchell, K.	Landstown	Bender, Z.	Academy at VA Randolph			Pollard, N.	Thomas Dale
Ross, D.	Granby	Bonner, N.	Tallwood			Banks, I.	Colonial Beach
Thomas, P.	Orange County	Hamilton, Dj.	Broad Run			Garey, K.	First Colonial
Wilson, Z.	Green Run	Rowand, R.	Matoaca				
Battle, S.	Deep Creek	Evans, T.	Woodbridge				
Bridges, D.	Western Branch	Mosely, M.	Norview				
Lyons, S.	Menchville	Thompson, J.	Lee				
Mick, T.	Deep Creek	Walker, B.	King William				
Mills, D.	Mountain View						
Trueheart, M.	Huguenot						

Below is a schedule of upcoming events for Challenge Cadets:

### JUNE

11/18: Field Trip— American Rover

18: Mentor Day

25/26: Rappel Tower

30: 1st Round of Gold Phase

### JULY

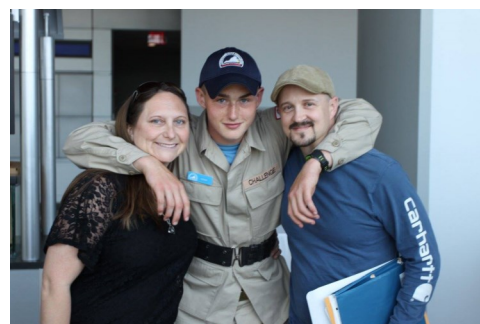
1-10: 2nd Pass Home for Cadets

16: Mentor Workshop

23: Field Trip— Aquarium

26: STEM Activities

30: Family Day



*Cadet Harrison (Wise, Va.) reunites with his parents at the first Pass.*

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**Commonwealth Challenge**  
**Youth Academy**

