

# Appalachian ChalleNGe Advantage



Kentucky National Guard Youth Challenge Program  
VOLUME XXVI, ISSUE VI

Academy Newsletter  
JUNE 2025

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## IMPORTANT DATES:

**Graduation:**  
June 14th  
**Intake Class 027**  
July 13th

## Service

In light of the Southern Kentucky tornado outbreak and the lives affected, Cadets and Staff of the Appalachian ChalleNGe Academy put feet and hands in action to serve in London, Kentucky. The devastation of life, property and possessions is truly unfathomable, but like most Appalachians the spirits were high and most were looking for opportunity to serve. We are truly honored to have partnered with tremendous organizations to bring some relief and support to our community.







"Shoot Hoops!" is a drug education and prevention initiative withing Operation UNITE. This program is provided through a partnership with the Kentucky Army National Guard. Former University of Kentucky point guard and four-time All-SEC Academic Team member Jarrod Polson was on hand as a positive role model. UNITE, an acronym meaning Unlawful Narcotics Investigations Treatment and Education, reflects the three pronged, comprehensive approach deemed necessary to combating substance abuse and misuse. Operation UNITE serves 43 counties in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. We are proud of the relationship the Appalachian Challenge Academy and Operation UNITE maintain.





# The "Murph"

Our 1st Platoon Spartans and 2nd Platoon Knights completed "The Murph" over the Memorial Day weekend. "The Murph" is a popular fitness challenge named after Navy SEAL Lieutenant Michael P. Murphy, who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during Operation Red Wings in Afghanistan. The workout, which includes a 1-mile run, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups, 300 squats, and another 1-mile run, is often performed during Memorial Day weekend to honor his sacrifice and the sacrifices of all those who have served. ALWAYS REMEMBER AND HONOR!





# Poke Sallet

The Harlan County Poke Sallet Festival has been a local feature for 70 years. The Festival today has carnival rides, local and national music entertainers, local artisans and crafters, food, car show, pet show, 5K, and of course, the traditional poke dinner. The Appalachian Challenge Academy is honored to be represented by our Color Guard for the Poke Sallet Festival's opening ceremony. The Academy also provides community service in several aspects throughout the Festival and are proud of our Cadets for their hard work in serving their community.





# Hands ON

Cadets in their recent visit to the Pine Mountain Settlement School had the opportunity to get hands on with activities such as blacksmithing, woodworking, sewing, and cooking. Pine Mountain Settlement School states their mission is to enrich people and enhance lives through Appalachian place-based education for all ages. Founded in 1913 as a school for children and later high school. Today the Environmental Education and Appalachian Culture programs are still going strong at. Our cadets find through this hands on learning opportunity a sense of “can do” which can be applied in many other aspects of their lives!





# Reality Store

It can be a hard lesson when we realize the cost of what things cost in life. The Reality Store, Is an activity through the 4-H and leads young people through “The Real World” financial decisions for one month. Paying taxes, housing, transportation, child care, insurance, medical, and utilities are just a few of the categories that are examined. Each cadet had the opportunity to choose their career in which determined their monthly income. They then by chance of the draw was given how many children, pets, and other details for their situation. Once they had their pay and their life circumstance it was off to pay their taxes and other expenditures. It often doesn't take long to hear “I'm going broke!”. Part of preparing for true success is to see and understand the reality of what financial responsibility brings to each of us.





# JUMP!!!

AIR RAID in London, KY gives a great opportunity to JUMP! Getting out of the Academy and experiencing a reward for hard work and dedication, is one of the things that bring the lessons and skills learned at the ACA come to life. Fun, YES, but ultimately helps reinforce many aspects of the growth these Cadet's have made in their lives and will continue to pursue long into the future.



# ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED

## Week 18 Promotions



### Level 4

MSG

Bragg	Jordan	Rice
Brooks	King	Roberts
Calderon-Lopez	Manifold	Snyder, M
Eden	McElrath	Spencer
Ellison	Miller, G	Sprader
Fields, S	Miracle	Stephan
Gabbard	Noto	Stephens
Gillum, G	Pennix	Thomas
Good	Perry	Thompson
Heckert	Phillips	Tiravanti
Hernandez, D	Phipps	Weaver
Holcomb	Picard	
Johnson, K	Plowden	



### Level 3.5

SFC



### Level 3

SSG

Evans	Bowen	Pullen
Fields, O	Johnson, A	Ruark
Grace	Lawrence	Wheeler
James	McKenzie	



### Level 2.5

SGT

Alcorn	Harrod	Staten
Barker, E	Harvey	Sturdivant
Beckerle	Hernandez, G	Tilbe
Durbin	Slone	Williams
Goble	Smith, B	
Griffin	Smith, R	



### Level 2

CPL



### Level 1.5

PFC



### Level 1

PVT

Ball	Robinette	Deaton	Anthony	Geers
Goforth, J	Smith-Miller	Gillum, W	Arabie	Goforth, P
Hocker	Walsh	Lacourt-Granado	Barker, D	Haskins
Jenkins		Rose	Clark	Perkins
Miller, L		Vance	Dotson	
Newton			Englert	

Bruce	Jones	Tilley
Ehling	McCalvin	
Hutchinson	Snyder, H	

**Level 4**  
Master  
Sergeant (MSG)

**Level 3.5**  
Sergeant First  
Class (SFC)

**Level 3**  
Staff Sergeant  
(SSG)

**Level 2.5**  
Sergeant (SGT)

**Level 2**  
Corporal (CPL)

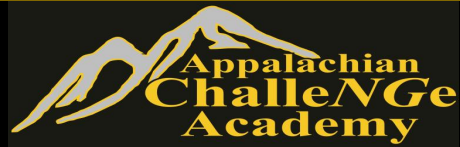
**Level 1.5**  
Private First  
Class (PFC)

**Level 1**  
Private (PVT)

**Level 0**  
Candidate



# 11 1/2 years out



The Appalachian Challenge Academy. What a life changing experience. Ups and downs and everything in between have happened since then, but I have a lot more tools under my belt I gained from the Academy that I still use everyday that help me get through. I'm a long hair skateboarder to this day as I was back then too. Arriving at the Academy and had to get my hair buzzed so I immediately wasn't a happy camper. Spurred out something back to a cadre in chow line and found a new definition of respect and discipline through physical exercise. I hated it at first. I spent 90% of my phone time in the beginning just begging and pleading with mom to come back and pick me up.

After probably at least two weeks I started to feel better. The routine was less unfamiliar, and I started making friends. Real friends! I learned the hard way that the friends I thought were real friends back home, weren't what I thought they were. I learned so many things throughout being there, pushed myself so much past giving up, that I didn't know was even possible.

I was recently in a really bad car wreck. My fault, driving way too fast through a corner and hit a tree head on. I broke my femur in three places, knee, ankle, three ribs, and a vertebrae in my neck. It's been a hard recovery but just 5 and a half months later, I'm doing everything on my own for myself again. Already working a little painting houses again, even rode around on my skateboard a little. I know that the lessons I learned at the Academy have helped me push past and not give up. I have moral standards and set goals for myself and follow through even when it hurts and I wanna quit. I don't regret in the slightest going to the Appalachian Challenge Academy. I would recommend going. I pushed through all the way to being the first one to get a Director's Award. If I can do it anyone can.

Blair Singleton ACA Class 003

On July 18, 2013, I sent my only child away on his 16th birthday to enroll in Class 003 at the ACA. While I knew it was for his own good, it was still one of the hardest things I have ever done. Now looking back, that was one of the best decisions as a parent I have ever made. He learned how to thrive with structure, make better decisions, be a team player, earned his GED at the age of 16, was baptized there in Elkhorn Creek, and excelled in the environment with the help of the amazing members of the Cadre, many of whom I still consider friends to this day.

After graduation, I'd love to say it was all smooth sailing from there; however, Blair had quite a few big bumps in the road for a while. BUT, here we are years later (he's now 27) and he is still taking many of the things he learned at the ACA all those years ago to turn it around. He is making better decisions and has made new and positive friends who support him in all he does.

I have always and will continue to recommend the ACA to anyone who may have children or grandchildren that need that extra "push" to turn it around. If you're on the fence about the ACA Program, jump off that fence and make the same decision I did. I promise that you and your child will come out the other side in a much better place than you are now. It will be worth it as you watch your child complete the Program and see the look of pride on their face when they receive their Diploma. It's a memory that will forever live in my mind.

Tracye Taylor, Proud Mother of Cadet, James Blair Singleton, ACA Class 003





# Recruiting News

**Now Accepting New Applications for Class 027**

## Meet our Recruiting Admissions Team



**Rusty Bailey**



**Dexter Day**



**Eric Gray**

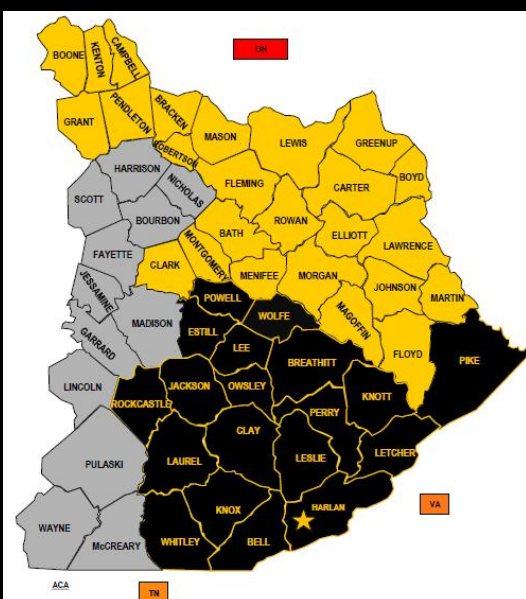


**Sarah Lawson**

**Class 027 will begin on July 13, 2025. Meet and Greets are a perfect opportunity to find out more information about our program, and also to sign your teen up for the program. Our recruiters will be available 3 to 7 pm to answer all your questions, and you don't have to be present the whole time. To complete an online application please visit our website: <https://challengeaca.com/apply->**

## Meet & Greet Dates

- ♦ **Williamsburg~ June 19, 2025**  
Hampton Inn, 530 KY 92,  
Williamsburg, KY
- ♦ **Somerset~ June 26, 2025**  
Holiday Inn, 50 Stevie Lynn Ln,  
Somerset, KY
- ♦ **Florence~ July 2&3, 2025**  
Holiday Inn/Cincinnati Airport, 1055  
Vandercar Way, Florence, KY
- ♦ **Lexington~ July 9&10, 2025**  
Holiday Inn (exit 108), 1976 Justice Dr.  
Lexington, KY



**NOTE: Things to bring to your Meet & Greet:**  
**Your Teen, Birth Certificate,**  
**SS Card, Insurance Card**

**Rusty Bailey**  
Cell: 606-344-2900  
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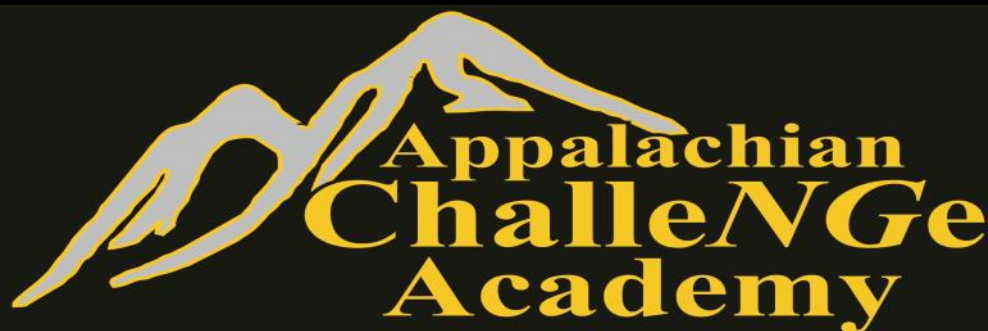
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**WE'RE NOT TELLING YOU IT'S GOING TO BE EASY**



**WE'RE TELLING YOU IT'S GOING TO BE WORTH IT!!!**

# Enrollment Now Open

## Class 27 Starts July 13, 2025

**[www.2abetterme.com](http://www.2abetterme.com)**  
**606-574-0303 or 855-596-4927**

The Appalachian ChalleNGe Academy is a 22 week, quasi-military program dedicated to advancing foundational development of regional youth. With a focus on 15<sup>1/2</sup>-18 year olds, it is our goal to provide a diverse skillset through our Eight Core Components that will prepare them to successfully transition into adulthood and create the future they set their sights on. If you would like more information or are interested in joining our community of support, feel free to contact us.

**We look forward to hearing from you!**



[facebook.com/acaharlan](https://facebook.com/acaharlan)



[@harlanaca](https://www.youtube.com/@harlanaca)

### APPALACHIAN CHALLENGE ACADEMY

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