



OCTOBER 2025

VOLUME XXVII ISSUE IV

**IMPORTANT****DATES:****Cadet Virtual  
Reward Days:**

Oct 25-26

Nov 27-28

**Commandants  
Cup:**

Oct 13-16

**Blackhawk:**

October 28

**Into the Woods: Class 027 Field Training Exercise****2****Agility****3****Teamwork****4****Shoot Hoops Not Drugs****5****Achievement Unlocked: Cadet Promotions Week****6****Post Residential Testimonial****7****Recruiting, Meet and Greet****8****Class 28 Enrollement / Contact Information****9**



# INTO THE WOODS

During Week 11, our cadets participated in a much anticipated milestone of our program—Field Training Exercise (FTX) at the CSM Harold L. Disney Training Center located in Barbourville, KY. This cyclical training offers our cadets a chance to show themselves how they have grown physically and mentally while attending the Appalachian Challenge Academy through a collection of activities meant to put this growth to the test. These activities include their second PT test, a land navigation competition, and a run-through of the obstacle courses provided at the training center.



The CSM Harold L. Disney Training Center which consists of over 500 acres of wooded terrain, is used to train National Guard units of Eastern Kentucky. The center is named after CSM Harold L. Disney who served in the military for 38 years, during which time he played an instrumental role in helping the local National Guard units receive effective training and preparation needed in the line of duty at the site named after him in 1974. He retired with numerous accolades that depicted his level of dedication and service to

his fellow soldiers ([whfrtc.ky.gov/hldtc](http://whfrtc.ky.gov/hldtc)).

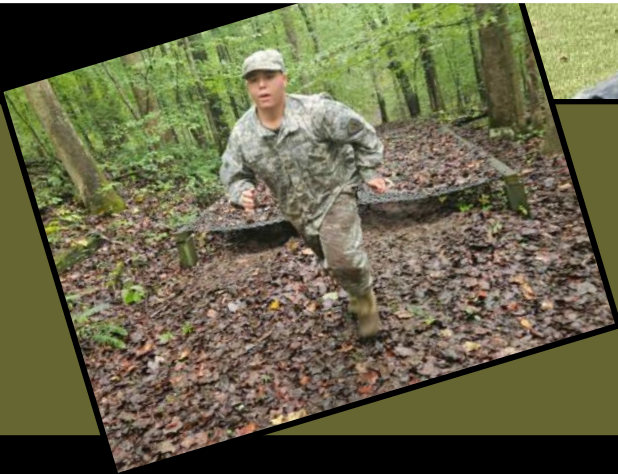
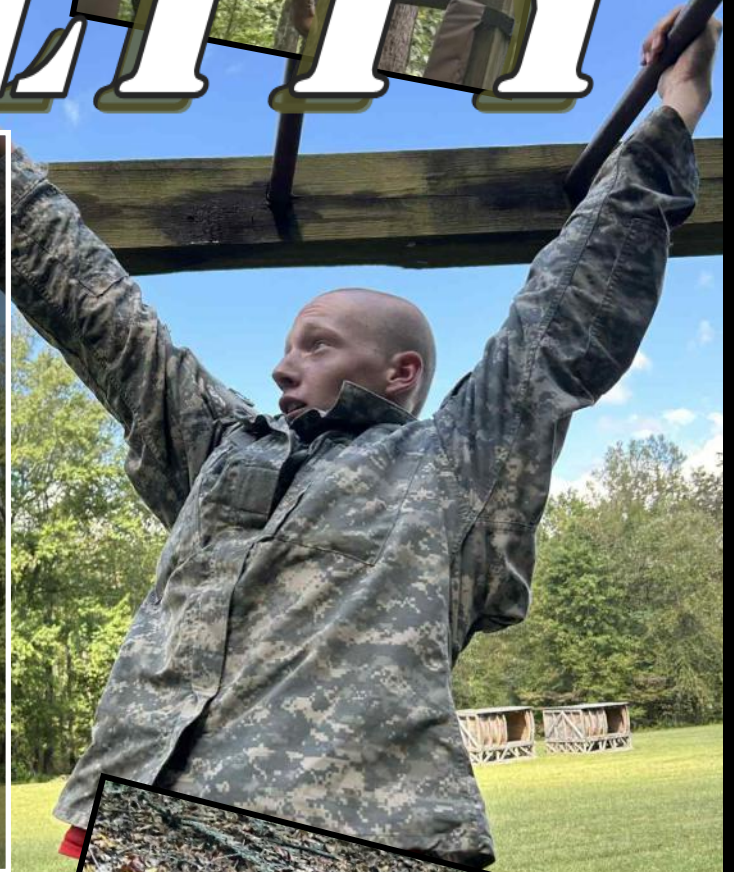
Each cycle when we visit this training facility, it is our hope that the cadets will have the kind of educational and confidence-building experience that the facility's namesake intended. And despite having this event every cycle, we never tire of watching cadets learn that just because something is unfamiliar does not mean it is intimidating, and just because something is challenging does not mean it is impossible. This edition of our newsletter is comprised of the skills and abilities our cadets use to take their FTX by storm and will give you a closer look at what it takes to be a cadet!





# AGILITY

Agility is the ability to move your body quickly and easily using a mixture of strength, reflexes, and balance. Cadets practice physical agility during their weekly Commandant Competitions while playing sports such as basketball or ultimate frisbee. These events require hand-eye coordination and dexterity that easily translates to the obstacle courses provided at the Harold L. Disney Training Center.







## **You're only as strong as your weakest link! —**

Words that are often said as cadre to encourage comradery in cadets are never truer than during the land navigation competition at their FTX. Platoons are divided into groups and given four points to plot out. Once cadets determine the location of their points on the map and assign roles to their group members, the competition begins! The teams have an hour to find all of their points that are located throughout the training facility's 500+ acres. The race against time and unfamiliar terrain make it the ultimate test of strategy and...

# **TEAMWORK**







## Shoot Hoops — Not Drugs

“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.



# ACHIEVEMENT

## Week 10 Promotions

# UNLOCKED


**Level 3.5**
**SFC**

Adams	Hamilton	Nichols	Scholes
Barnes	Hatton	Parks	Smallwood
Begley	Howard	Pegg	Smith, A
Bell	Jones	Potter	Smith, C
Bradley	Larson	Proffitt	Smith, R
Click	Ligier	Roark	True
Guzman	Merrell	Salisbury	Velazquez
Hackman	Napier	Sandlin	Wilson, B


**Level 3**
**SSG**

Adkins	Gray	O'Neal	Summers
Bernstorff	Griggs	Pace	Waggoner
Cooper	Lewis	Smith, O	
Cunningham	Newland	Sobecki	


**Level 2.5**
**SGT**

Davis	Helton	Renfro	Thomsberry
Glenn	Marcum	Rose	Wallace
Gribbins	Marshall	Sitamza-Kamdem	
Hamblin	Martin	Thompson	


**Level 2**
**CPL**

Brooks	Evans, J	Gross	Whitt
Clark	Fisk	Hopper	Wilson, J
Cornelison	Fletcher	McKnight	
Costello	Fondaw	McMillian, N	
Dyko	Fultz	Porter	


**Level 1.5**
**PFC**

Basford	Edelen	Maggard
Coppedge	Gibson	Stevens
Dennis	Gillum	Sumpter


**Level 1**
**PVT**

Bailey	Evans, M	Ross	Valdez
Cody	Hambrick	Sidell	
Coutina-Guizar	Miller	Strunk	



**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)



# Post Residential Testimonial



We would like to introduce you to Kyle, a graduate of the residential portion of the Appalachian Challenge Academy. He is currently in our post residential program where a Resource Advocate is in contact with him monthly the first year and the second year contact is made quarterly.

A bit of Kyle's story, "When I came to the ACA, I was on drugs I was fighting all the time. I didn't know what to expect when I first got there, I didn't think that place would help me but it did. I went from being the worst kid ever to the best kid, not the best because we all make mistakes, but you know after the ACA I got out and I started working but before the aca I didn't work. I was lazy depressed, always in my room after I got out though, now I'm always working 10 and 12 hours a day."

While at the ACA, our post residential team shares with and prepares the cadets for the post residential portion of our program. Kyle shares his thoughts of while he was hearing about this vital part of our program. "I thought you all was crazy I didn't think you all would actually be a resource like you all said, I didn't think you guys would help us."

After some life events that occurred recently in Kyle's life, he continued to share with us "but when I needed you, you was there because I stayed in contact with you all every month like I was. You all did what you said you would, and my Resource Advocate helped me out when 'life happened', being there when I needed you."

Kyle says the ACA "can help you go a long way, it's hard at the ACA but it is the challenge academy for a reason to, challenge yourself!"

Our team doesn't stop the day of graduation from the residential portion of our program. Instead we actively seek to be a resource for each of our graduates helping them find their success in each part of their lives. Often like Kyle, the idea that someone really will be there when hard or difficult things happen isn't realized until a real need arises, but we all know "life happens". Few things motivate us more than knowing that someone who cares will be checking in on our progress and ready to encourage our success. That is the mission of the Appalachian Challenge Academy's post residential team, to see every one of our graduates be their very best!

# Recruiting News

**Now Accepting New Applications for Class 028**

## Meet our Recruiting Admissions Team



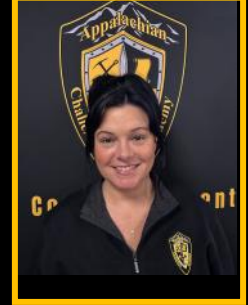
**Rusty Bailey**



**Dexter Day**



**Eric Gray**



**Sarah Lawson**

### Fall 2025 Orientation Dates

All times are from 3pm to 7pm

#### Somerset Holiday Inn

50 Stevie Lynn Lane

October 20

November 24

December 15

#### London Holiday Inn (exit 38)

506 Minton Drive

October 21

November 25

December 16

#### Lexington Holiday Inn

(exit 108 Hamburg)

1976 Justice Drive

October 22

November 26

December 17

#### Florence Holiday Inn/

#### Cincinnati Airport

1055 Vandecar Way

October 23

December 4

December 18

#### Williamsburg Hampton Inn

(exit 11)

530 KY 92

October 8

November 20



#### Rusty Bailey

Cell: 606-344-2900

[rusty.bailey@challengeaca.com](mailto:rusty.bailey@challengeaca.com)

#### Eric Gray

Cell: 606-371-3436

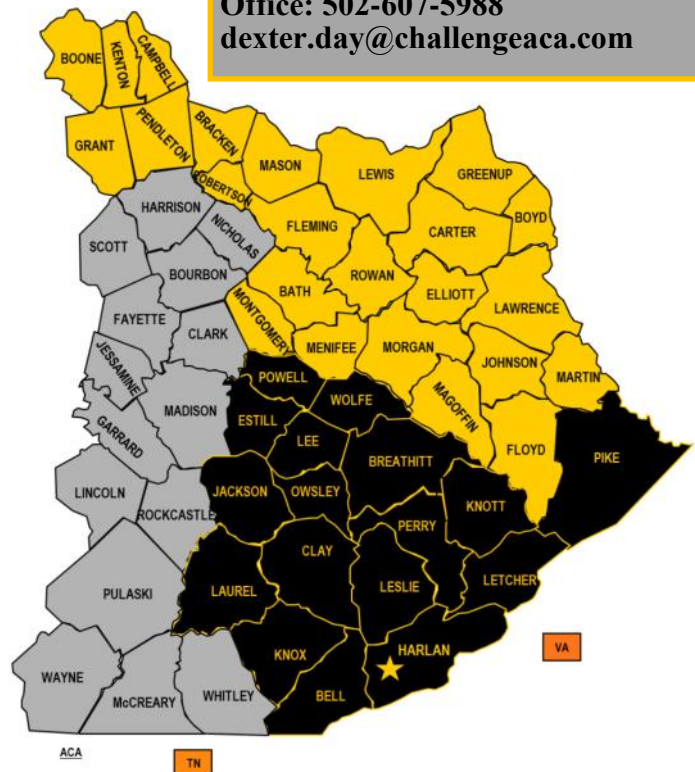
[eric.gray@challengeaca.com](mailto:eric.gray@challengeaca.com)

#### Dexter Day

Cell: 606-273-8044

Office: 502-607-5988

[dexter.day@challengeaca.com](mailto:dexter.day@challengeaca.com)



[www.2abetterme.com](http://www.2abetterme.com)

[admissions@challengeaca.com](mailto:admissions@challengeaca.com)



**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 28 STARTS  
JANUARY 11, 2026**

**DREAM**

**BELIEVE IN YOURSELF & NEVER GIVE UP!**

**BELIEVE**

**THINK POSITIVE & ALWAYS GIVE YOUR ALL**

**ACHIEVE**

**ALWAYS ENCOURAGE & DREAM BIG!**

**CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.2ABETTERME.COM](http://WWW.2ABETTERME.COM)**



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**[INSTAGRAM.COM/ACA4CHANGE](https://www.instagram.com/ACA4CHANGE)**

**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.**

**Appalachian Challenge Academy**

**465 Grays Drive, Grays Knob, KY 40829**

**Admin Office: 606-574-0303 Toll Free: 855-596-4927**

**[admissions@challengeaca.com](mailto:admissions@challengeaca.com)**