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IMPORTANT DATES

**Class 029
Graduation**
December 12

**Class 030
Intake**
January 10th

ACCLIMATION GRADUATION



It was with great honor that BG (R) Charles T. Jones Executive Director Department of Military Affairs joined us for our Acclimation Graduation ceremony. His rousing and challengeNG words were filled with wisdom, personal experience, and great leadership to success. “It doesn’t matter where you are from, it’s where you are going” General Jones related, “if I as a kid from Eastern Kentucky can do it, you can too”.

The transition from Candidate to Cadet begins not only the introduction to greater privileges but also greater responsibilities, and greater opportunities. As each of the Candidates raised their right hand and stated the Cadet Oath, part of which they pledged to “never accept anything less than my best”. It is with this oath each was accepting the challenge ahead to be a Cadet aimed to the full completion of the program here at the Appalachian Challenge Academy and a lifetime of focus on their success.



The conclusion of the Acclimation Phase ushers in the true essence of the Youth Challenge experience. These newly minted Cadets have persevered to triumph the Acclimation Phase's initial (2) week introduction to a quasi-military life, and has poised these young men and women for the journey ahead. Acclimation is a preparation and launching point to showcase the life changes that only Youth Challenge can evoke, securing that the mission

of the program has been activated. From meeting new friends, to instruction on facing movements, these few weeks serve as a true learning opportunity. The next (20) weeks will be a journey that will inspire, lead, and direct the (116) cadets who achieved the right to become an Appalachian Challenge Academy Cadet. Class 029 cadets will begin the pathway towards academic goals, meeting physical training standards, and holistic character development that only seemed but a dream on their initial Intake Day. As each Cadet embraces the challenge ahead, they are positioned to take control of their future, evoke their own potential, and embark on a transformational journey that few options compare. Join us in congratulating these young men and women who now make up Class 029 of the Appalachian Challenge Academy.





A Mean Routine

Showing Cadets the Value of a Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
0600-0800	Wake Up, Morning Hygiene Routine, Cleaning Details Breakfast Chow
0815	Morning Formation (also known as "Reveille")
0830-1500 1130-1230	Classwork/Weekly Community Service Lunch Chow
1500-1600	Prepare for Physical Training (PT) Snack Chow
1600	Evening Formation (also known as "Retreat")
1615-1700	PT, Recreational Time, and Drill and Ceremony
1700-1800	Dinner Chow
1800-2030	Cleaning Details, Showers, Study Time, Mail Call, Letter Writing, and Quiet Time
2100-2200	Lights Out

Our cadets are introduced to a rigorous schedule while attending the ACA which is detailed in the graphic above. From morning to night, a cadet's day is carefully planned to ensure all their needs are met and tasks are completed with room left to relax after their hard work is done. We find that providing youth with such a routine introduces them to time management skills and further benefits them by demonstrating that "I don't have the time" is never an excuse with the proper planning. We encourage cadets to continue making daily schedules when they return home to help make time for homework, exercise, and their other responsibilities.

FACT

Because we are a quasi-military academy, we utilize military terminology in our day to day operations.

Words like "chow" (meaning meal time), "lights out" (meaning bedtime), and our use of military time are just a few examples.

When MIE Becomes WE

The Platoon Structure

When Class 029 began, our cadets were placed into the platoons that will act as their peers, family, and team over the next 5½ months. Our Academy is comprised of 3: 1st Platoon Spartans, 2nd Platoon Knights, and 3rd Platoon Gladiators. Each platoon is divided into 4 squads. The number of squad members varies by the number of cadets in each platoon. A variety of our cadets' daily activities are determined and completed by squads to sharpen their teamwork skills and build a sense of comradery!



Within their platoon, a **cadet** will have the opportunity to master their Leadership/Followership Core Component. The first available leadership position offered to cadets is **squad leader**. Squad leaders are responsible for ensuring cleaning details are completed and that uniforms are to standard within their squad. All cadets will complete a week as a squad leader to test their leadership skills and learn the challenges that come with supervising their peers. The remaining cadets will act as squad members to learn how to be followers and take orders from their peers in the squad leader positions. **Platoon sergeant**, or “PG” is the next leadership position available. The platoon sergeant acts as a liaison between the cadre staff and platoon. They will communicate orders and information, control cadet movement during the daily schedule, and will report accountability of their platoon during formation. For cadets that show exemplary leadership capabilities, additional positions are offered.



Teaching cadets to recognize and respect the authority that comes with being a leader is a crucial because it helps them recognize to respect the effort dedicated to achieving those roles while allowing them visualize what it takes to earn those roles themselves. For many cadets, mastering the skills of being a leader and a follower will be a challenging task. However, learning to inspire their peers while also mastering the ability to be a team player is a skillset that will help each cadet when they go on to join the workforce, participate in group or team activities in school, and more.




ADVICE

SUPPORT

MOTIVATION

DIRECTION

TRAINING

COACHING

SUCCESS

Taking Action

Creating a Post-Residential Action Plan

With the long-term success of cadets in mind, helping them to create a sustainable foundation for their future is of the upmost importance. This means we do not shy away from preparing cadets for the sometimes adverse nature of the real world, but instead, focus on preparing them to have the capacity to work through any obstacles they may face in the future. And one of those lessons is that no matter what they face in life, they do not have to go through it alone.

Many cadets find that the aspect of the program they most admire is the newly developed support system they've received outside of their existing family and friends. This support system is not by accident but is, instead, an integral piece of all Youth Challenge programs. We recognize the value a community of support has for young individuals. Whether those values are the broadening of a cadet's horizon or creating accountability in their lives, it also reminds our cadets that there is always someone in their corner rooting them on.

One of the ways this support system shows up is through our Post Residential phase. Our staff Resource Advocates are responsible for helping to cultivate a support system for each cadet once they have completed the program and help to monitor their personal goals and well-being through monthly contacts. With use of the approved contact methods each program graduate and their Resource Advocate are in regular contact to help see success in their daily lives and ultimately see those successes add up to real and lasting victories.

In preparation for this Post Residential phase of the program, starting in Week 4, cadets attend a weekly "Post-Residential Action Plan" (PRAP) course. In this course, cadets will create goals using a SMART Goal framework (pg.7) that they will maintain throughout the Residential and Post-Residential phases. It is far more than words on paper or lofty ideas as each cadet has the support mechanism not only while here at the ACA but with that regular contact with our Resource Advocates for the 24 months following their graduation from the program.

Working SMARTer,

Not Harder



The SMART Goals framework is designed to create goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. In other words, it creates goals that are made to be accomplished. During PRAP, cadets will use this framework to establish short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. Once the cadets graduate, their mentors will work alongside them to monitor and encourage the completion of these goals.

S

SPECIFIC

Clearly define the goal

M

MEASURE- ABLE

Create measurements to track the progress of your goal

A

ATTAINABLE

Ensure the goal is within your abilities to reach

R

RELEVANT

Set a goal that is realistic and pertinent to your needs

T

TIME- BOUND

Establish a reasonable timeline to complete your goal

10 years out



The moment I arrived at the Appalachian Challenge Academy, I was a young kid, often found with the wrong crowd, depressed, socially awkward, and convinced nothing was wrong with my path. The 22 transformative weeks at the Academy didn't just push me to "fit in" it taught me to reinvent myself on my own terms.

One of the later and toughest tests was the Artemus training course. Physically demanding and mentally relentless, Artemus forced me to confront my self-doubt head-on. At first, I kept thinking, "I'm only doing this because someone told me to." But as I dug in, and with nowhere to go but forward, I shifted to, "I'm doing this because I choose to become better." That simple change in mindset unlocked a drive I never knew I had.

My growth really crystallized when I was tapped as squad leader and later platoon leader. Under the guidance of my Cadre, I learned to balance empathy with expectation. I discovered that leadership isn't barking orders it's knowing your team's strengths, trusting them under pressure, and lifting them when they doubt themselves. Seeing each cadet overcome their fears, drama, and hate, to complete the objective showed me what real teamwork looks like.

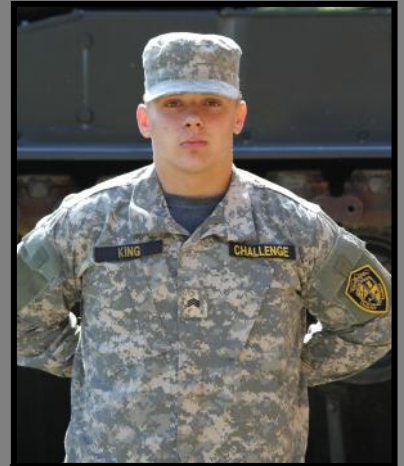
Daily routines early morning PT, precision inspection drills, academic sessions weren't punishments; they were building blocks. Waking up before sunrise taught me discipline isn't about rigidity but about honoring your word to yourself and to those you lead. By celebrating each small victory a timed run, a flawless drill, a perfect score on a written test I learned that consistent effort compounds into extraordinary rewards.

Today, I'm no longer that troubled kid who shrugged off consequences. I now walk focused, resilient, and committed to continuous growth. I know how to set goals, break them into daily tasks, and inspire others to do the same. No matter the challenge ahead of me, knowing I could thrive at the ACA tells me I can accomplish any task.

I am now 26 years old, Engaged to the love of my life, in my own apartment, I have an awesome car, have a great job and am looking towards buying a home. I have no doubt in my mind that, if the Academy hadn't found me, I would be in a much darker place. I am grateful and forever indebted to the folks at the ACA.

To parents weighing this decision: Appalachian Challenge Academy will test your child in ways you can't imagine. It will push them to their limits and then show them they're capable of so much more. If you want your son or daughter to build unshakable confidence, leadership skills, and a mindset that sees challenges as opportunities, ACA is the place that will make it happen.

Micah King ACA Class 008



Recruiting News

Now Accepting New Applications for Class 028

Meet our Recruiting Admissions Team



Rusty Bailey



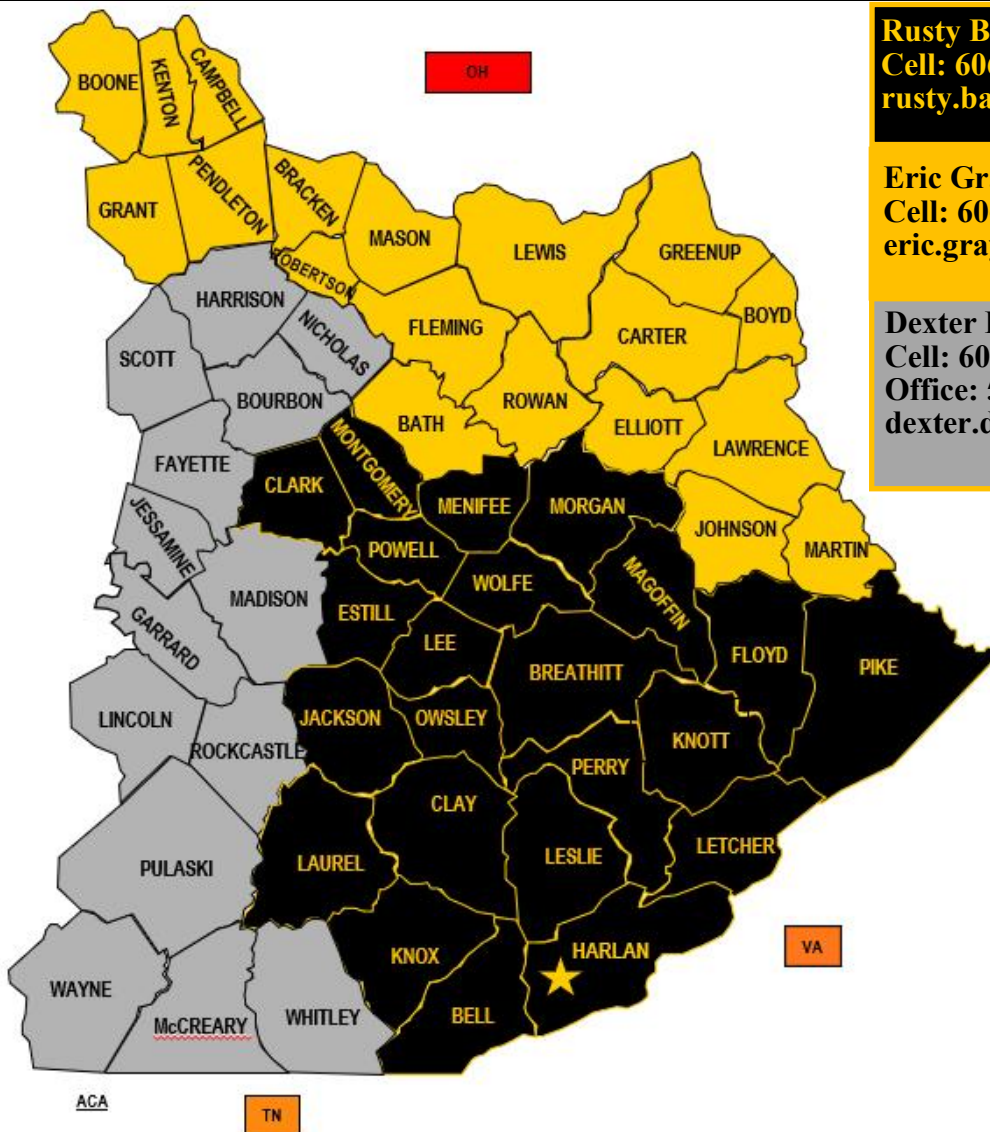
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**WE'RE NOT TELLING YOU
IT'S GOING TO BE EASY**

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



ENROLLMENT NOW OPEN



CLASS 30 STARTS

JANUARY 10, 2027

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

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Instagram [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^{1/2}-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

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