

Appalachian ChalleNGe Advantage



Kentucky National Guard Youth Challenge Program

Academy Newsletter

VOLUME XXVIII, ISSUE I

JANUARY 2026

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Reality Store	2
Black Hawk	3
ACA BCA FTX	4
Hands On	5
Honor Platoon	6
Red Cross	7
JUMP	8
Cadet Achievements	9
Recruiting News	10
Class 28 Enrollement / Contact Information	11

The ChalleNGe

At the Appalachian ChalleNGe Academy, challenge isn't just a word, it's a way of life. Cadets arrive prepared to work hard, but many soon discover that the greatest tests are not just physical, academic, or disciplinary. They are personal. Every day pushes our cadets to examine who they are, who they want to become, and what it will take to get there. That constant stretch can be uncomfortable, but growth rarely happens within comfort.



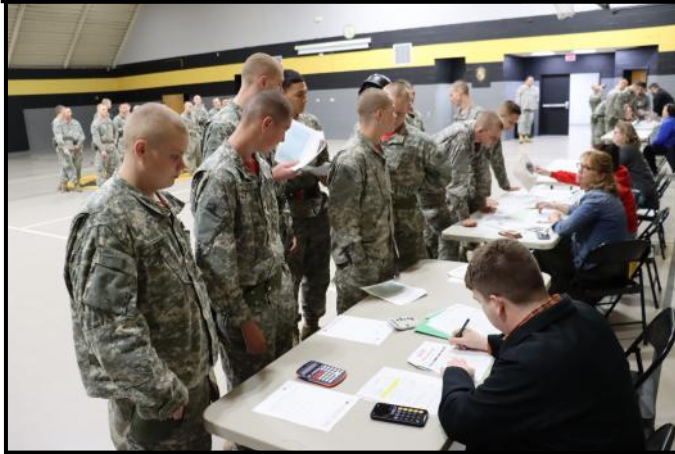
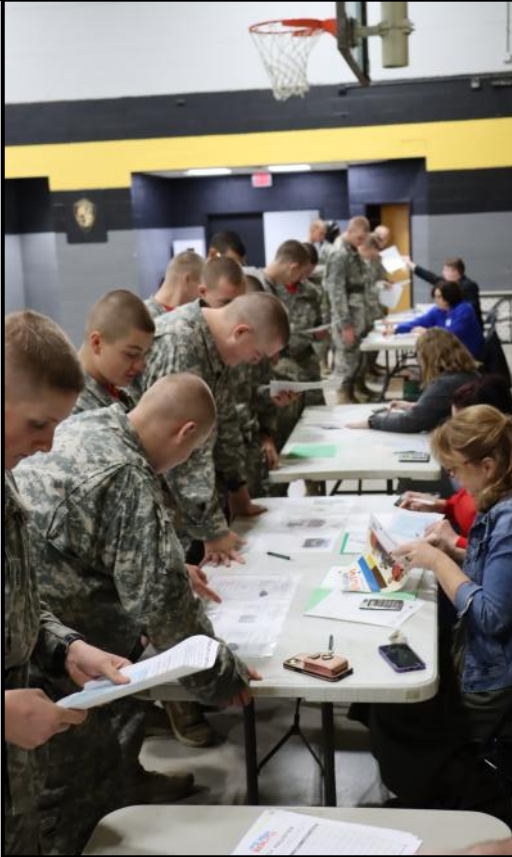
Those challenges take shape through opportunities found almost nowhere else. From structured leadership roles to disciplined routines, from mentorship to service back to our communities, cadets find themselves learning lessons that cannot be replicated in most circumstances. The Academy is a place where young people are given the chance to fail forward, overcome obstacles, and experience things that most teens will never encounter. It is in those "once in a lifetime" moments that confidence takes root and new capabilities emerge.

In the end, the journey is worth it. While the days may be long and the expectations high, cadets leave with stories they are proud to tell, skills they can rely on, and a sense of accomplishment earned through effort. The Appalachian Challenge Academy proves that challenge is not something to fear it is something that shapes, strengthens, and prepares young people for the life ahead. And for those willing to engage the experience fully, it becomes one of the most valuable chapters in their young lives.

Reality Store



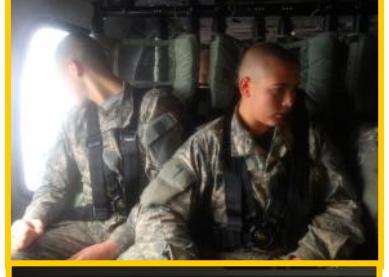
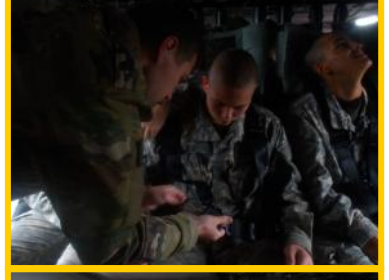
Recently, our cadets had the privilege of participating in Harlan County's 4-H Reality Store. This activity provided cadets with the experience of creating a budget and making financial decisions based on their given income and family.



Black Hawk



An opportunity that few get is to load up on a Black Hawk helicopter and take flight! That is exactly what Cadets from class 027 got to do. More than just a ride in the sky, it provides a hope within that these young men and women that they can reach heights that they never before thought possible. Opportunity to set aside fears, anxieties, and doubt in order to accomplish great things both now and in their future. The Black Hawk helicopter known for its reliability and ability to handle a wide range of missions, from troop transport, electronic warfare, aeromedical evacuation, air assault operations, and much more is equipped well for survivability and capability. Our Cadets too are being equipped for a wide range of life missions and, regardless of what they choose to pursue in their life, they are learning the skills to be equipped well for survivability and capability in all their future endeavors. We look forward to seeing them “take flight” in their lives well into the future!



Kentucky Youth ChalleNGe FTX

The Bluegrass Station recently hosted the Kentucky Youth ChalleNGe FTX



Hands On

The Pine Mountain Settlement School, a non-profit organization located within our county, dedicated to enriching lives through Appalachian place-based education for people of all ages. For our cadets, this visit to Pine Mountain Settlement School unfolds as a series of workshops, carefully designed to impart essential skills and crafts deeply rooted in the region's traditions. Through hands-on engagement, cadets have the opportunity to delve into the art of sewing, baking, woodworking, and blacksmithing. We are immensely grateful to have a local community that shares our commitment to educating and empowering our youth.



Honor Platoon

Class 027 Honor Platoon Cadets recently attended the University of Kentucky Wildcats vs Tennessee Tech Football game at Kroger Field.



Red Cross

ACA was honored to host W. John Matthews III, the Senior Regional Program Specialist for the American Red Cross. Mr. Matthews was joined for the presentation by Troy and Mary Snyder. Their presentation showcased the connection that the Red Cross makes in their Service to the Armed Forces and International Humanitarian Law.



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



ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED

Week 21 Promotions



Level 4 MSG

Adams	Cooper	Napier	Smith, A
Adkins	Griggs	Newland	Smith, C
Barnes	Hackman	Nichols	Sobecki
Begley	Hamilton	Pace	Summers
Bell	Helton	Pegg	True
Bernstorf	Howard	Proffitt	Velazquez
Bradley	Jones	Roark	Wilson, B
Brooks	Lewis	Scholes	
Click	Ligier	Smallwood	



Level 3.5 SFC

Davis	Hatton	Sandlin	Thompson
Edelen	Larson	Sitamza-Kamdem	Thornsberry
Evans, J	Marshall	Smith, O	Waggoner
Fletcher	Parks	Strunk	
Gribbins	Salisbury	Sumpter	



Level 3 SSG

Basford	Renfro
Cody	
Hamblin	
O'Neal	



Level 2.5 SGT

Costello	Maggard
Dougherty	McMillian
Fultz	Wallace
Gibson	



Level 2 CPL

Clark	Gillum	Hughes	Merrell
Coppedge	Gray	Kiser	Porter
Dyko	Gross	Marcum	Thoroughman
Fisk	Hopper	Martin	



Level 1.5 PFC

Bailey	Whitt
Coutina-Guizar	Wilson, J
Ross	



Level 1 PVT

Cornelison	Peck
Long	Sidell
Mcknight	

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)

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

London Holiday Inn (exit 38)
506 Minton Drive
December 16

Lexington Holiday Inn
(exit 108 Hamburg)
1976 Justice Drive
December 17
January 5
January 6

**Florence Holiday Inn/
Cincinnati Airport**
1055 Vandecar Way
December 18

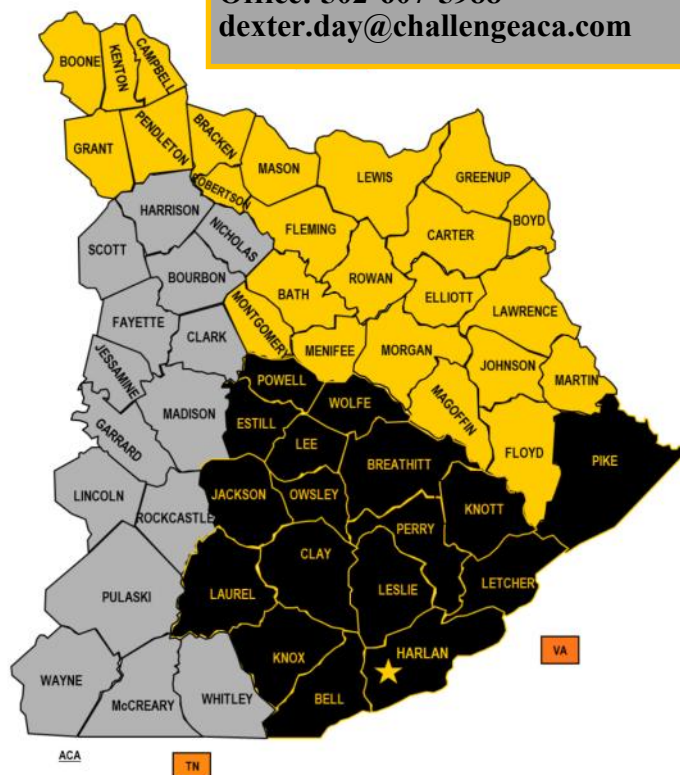
Williamsburg Hampton Inn
(exit 11)
530 KY 92
December 20



Rusty Bailey
Cell: 606-344-2900
rusty.bailey@challengeaca.com

Eric Gray
Cell: 606-371-3436
eric.gray@challengeaca.com

Dexter Day
Cell: 606-273-8044
Office: 502-607-5988
dexter.day@challengeaca.com



www.2abetterme.com
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 29 STARTS

JULY 12, 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



[FACEBOOK.COM/ACAHARLAN](https://www.facebook.com/ACAHARLAN)



[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

465 Grays Drive, Grays Knob, KY 40829

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

admissions@challengeaca.com