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# Adopt-a-Classroom, a Collaborative Affair

■ Since 2008, Civil Air Patrol has been conducting the free K-6 Aerospace Connections in Education (ACE) program for teachers nationwide. The program has already impacted more than 350,000 young people by increasing awareness and generating interest in aerospace-related science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects and careers. One of the goals of the ACE program is to also introduce young people to CAP's cadet program, which anyone can join beginning at age 12.



Cadet 1st Lt. Aeryn Anderson (left) and her brother, then-Cadet Maj. Aidan Anderson of the Alabama Wing's Redstone Composite Squadron discusses CAP's sUAS program with Sparkman Middle School teacher Kala Grice-Dobbins and her students.

All eight Civil Air Patrol regions have wings actively participating in the Adopt-a-Classroom Program.

To build on the success of ACE goals, CAP's Aerospace Education division formalized a new Adopt-a-Classroom campaign designed to connect squadrons with local educators to help promote STEM to their students while also sharing the benefits and growth opportunities of the cadet program.

Squadrons throughout the United States have accepted the challenge to adopt a public or private classroom teacher to provide aerospace/STEM support, student mentorship, and cadet program introduction. Ideally, the program targets Title I schools (located in areas where low-income families make up at least 40% of enrollment) to help bring awareness of STEM and career opportunities to a diverse and underrepresented group of students.

Adopted teachers participate in the ACE program — the foundational curriculum for the new squadron outreach program. All materials are provided to the teachers for in-class use or as send-home packets for hands-on activities during virtual presentations. Having CAP adult and cadet members conduct virtual and/or in-person instruction adds a new and exciting layer of aviation-related expertise that intrigues the students.

## Adopt-a-Classroom Ambassadors

Civil Air Patrol recently selected Adopt-a-Classroom ambassadors who have already succeeded in conducting such a collaborative community outreach program — the Indiana Wing’s chief of staff for missions, then-Lt. Col. Brian Schmuck, and Cadet 2nd Lt. Rylee Schmuck, cadet commander of the wing’s River City Cadet Squadron.

Lt. Col. Schmuck and the River City Cadet Squadron expanded their reach this year. The squadron has adopted three Mount Vernon, Indiana, schools with a total of seven fifth-grade classrooms. In-person classes have begun in accordance with local COVID-19 safety guidelines, and both the teachers and the students are quite excited about CAP’s involvement in their schools.

## Teachers Request Adoption

The first Civil Air Patrol educator member to request adoption was Kala Grice-Dobbins at Sparkman Middle School in Toney, Alabama. Introduced to CAP by the AFA’s Tennessee Valley Chapter 335 in Huntsville as their Chapter Teacher of the Year, Grice-Dobbins has embraced CAP’s free aerospace products and programs to enhance science classes for her Title I school students.

The Redstone Composite Squadron has adopted Grice-Dobbins and her classroom. Squadron commander Lt. Col. Kim Miller said, “Squadron cadets will join aerospace education officers Lts. Dan and Julie Anderson

in fulfilling the program requirements and providing the students stimulating lessons about aviation as well as the benefits of the cadet program. We look forward to hosting interested students in the near future.”

## Unique Opportunities

Grice-Dobbins shared her perspective of the program: “This program will allow my students to get hands-on STEM learning opportunities from people in their local community. They will also be introduced to cadets and learn about what it means to be a Civil Air Patrol cadet. I am excited for my students to see people in uniform who are here to teach them and be kind to them, as, unfortunately, uniforms sometimes give off a negative connotation for these students.

## CAP Cadets at School program involvement

Two CAP Cadets at School squadrons are taking advantage of the adopt program to mentor students either in their own school or in community schools.

The Colorado Military Academy Cadet Squadron cadets in Colorado Springs have adopted their school’s sixth-graders. Led by the squadron aerospace education officer, Senior Member Charles Davis, cadets are coordinating and conducting the lessons and mentoring younger students.

At the John Adams High School Cadet Squadron in South Bend, Indiana, commander Maj. Dan Walsh received a Great Lakes Region aerospace grant to adopt an entire school, the Madison

“AS A CADET INVOLVED IN THE ADOPT PROGRAM, I CAN SPEAK TO THE POSITIVE BENEFITS THAT IT HAS ON CADETS WHO CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE.”

— CADET 2ND LT, RYLEE SCHMUCK,  
ADOPT-A-CLASSROOM AMBASSADOR

“My Title I students do not have a lot of exposure to engineers, pilots, STEM experiences, or much outside of their local small areas. This program will expose them to many new and exciting lessons that I could not bring them on my own. I want my students to realize their potential and capabilities by gaining new perspectives from the CAP cadets.”

STEAM Academy. Although only the fifth-graders are officially in the adopt program, the squadron cadets are teaching the ACE program to all 600-plus K-5 students.

CAP Aerospace Education has long been a vehicle to increase organizational diversity. This program will allow greater outreach opportunities for our



## MINDSET |



squadrons to help put underrepresented students on a pathway toward preparing for a career about which they may not have been aware before connecting with CAP.

We also hope the program will help CAP's educator members understand and request the support and mentorship local squadrons can provide in conducting any of the many free aerospace/STEM programs offered to teachers nationwide. Senior members and cadets can serve as positive role models to students in the aerospace-themed academic,

character education, and physical fitness aspects of the ACE program.

Civil Air Patrol continues to be a beacon of hope in a time of uncertainty and lack of in-person engagement during this pandemic.

For more information about the program, email [adopt@capnhq.gov](mailto:adopt@capnhq.gov). ▲

Cadet 2nd Lt. Rylee Schmuck of the Indiana Wing's River City Cadet Squadron teaches the principles of flight to students at Mars Elementary.

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