

# Homeschooled Cadets

## Families Across America Turn to CAP for Leadership Skills

By Lenore Vickrey

Cadet 2nd Lt. Tina Davis was homeschooled all her life, and while she valued the experience and her parents' decision to teach her at home, she still "wanted to belong to something, to have a mission, to have friends with the same goals."

Living on an island in rural Maine, she didn't have the usual opportunities for interaction teenagers in public or private schools take for granted. Plus, "I

had this crazy idea I wanted to fly," she recalled. When she heard about Civil Air Patrol, she found what she was looking for. Sharing a ride with her cousin and fellow homeschooler Cadet



Cadet  
2nd Lt.  
Tina Davis



Cadet Capt. Dustin Corey, 18, of the Alabama Wing's 117th ANG Composite Squadron, said being homeschooled provided him the opportunity to earn his solo wings and a flight scholarship. He recently earned a private pilot's license.

2nd Lt. Elise Pusey, she joined the Downeast Patrol Composite Squadron in Trenton, Maine.

Davis went from being a shy, reserved teenager to a self-confident young adult who now teaches fellow CAP members with confidence. She

is deputy cadet commander of her squadron and the recipient of numerous honors and recognitions, including the 2006 Outstanding Noncommissioned Officer Award.

"CAP has benefited me in countless ways," she said. "Academically, it has given me self-discipline, study skills and perseverance. Also, I learned how to communicate and work with people my own age. I'm part of a team, which is really what I wanted in the first place."

Davis is one of an estimated 1.7 million homeschooled students in the U.S., a figure that is growing at a rate of 7 to 15 percent every year, according to the National Home Education Research Institute. That's about one in 33 school-aged children. Parents who choose to teach their children at home do

*“The relationship between CAP and homeschoolers is a win-win situation for everyone. Homeschoolers tend to bring an independent focus to their pursuits, which benefits CAP. But it's a reciprocal relationship. CAP gives us as much as we're willing to put in. . . . The Civil Air Patrol can use our independence, but tempered with an emphasis on a team effort.”*

*Cadet 2nd Lt. Tina Davis, Maine Wing*

so for different reasons, but many are dissatisfied with public or private schools where their children may be taught values counter to their own.

Homeschooled families across the nation have found a welcoming environment in CAP. Often, parents join along with their children. Tom and Brenda Reed of Maryland joined the Carroll Composite Squadron after two of their three children got involved. Interestingly, though, they were an Air Force family and their initial introduction to CAP came from a newspaper article.

### CONFIDENCE, CHARACTER, LEADERSHIP

“CAP was a perfect fit for our homeschooling program,” said Brenda. Their son, Jake, and daughter, Jennifer, were involved in recreation league sports, but needed an outlet for leadership development and growth. CAP gave them that and more.

Jake recently earned his Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award and was the squadron’s cadet commander. He organized and commands the Maryland Wing drill team, and has held many offices in the wing’s Cadet Advisory Council, in addition to being on the Tri-Wing Encampment staff.

“CAP has developed him into a well-rounded person,” said his mother. “He has confidence in what



Members of the Kawaguchi family participate in a Veteran’s Day Parade in Washington in 2003. Cadet Col. Paul Kawaguchi, left front, holds the squadron banner; his sister, Cadet 2nd Lt. Maria Kawaguchi, is behind him with a rifle. Also pictured, far left, is Cadet Maj. Neil Kawaguchi. The Kawaguchis are all members of the Washington Wing’s Tri-Cities Composite Squadron.



The Unrue brothers, Sam, Jon and Matt, recall a milestone moment. The five-year-old caricature Jon is holding was drawn after he took his first powered glider flight with CAP. Jon is a cadet major and Sam and Matt are sergeants in the Kansas Wing’s Emporia Composite Squadron.

he is doing and easily talks to people, whether formally or informally.”

Jennifer, now a college sophomore, is a cadet captain. “CAP

helped her develop her interest in computers by allowing her to be the cadet Web site officer for the Tri-Wing Encampment for three years in a row,” said Brenda. “I credit CAP with her remarkable improvement in public speaking, confidence and the ability to deal with tough situations.”

Their father, Tom, has served as cadet deputy commander and Brenda, formerly the squadron public affairs officer, is currently wing administrator.

“CAP has given us an outlet that we can work in together as a family,” said Brenda. “We are achieving many individual goals, and are spending a great deal of time together in the process.”

In Nebraska, the family of 1st Lt. Doug Tweedt has had a similar CAP experience. Their oldest son, Eric, was the first to join CAP, and his father joined soon afterwards. Six months later, Eric’s sister, Lauren,

joined. She has earned the Gen. Billy Mitchell and Amelia Earhart awards, and she wants to earn her Spaatz Award before leaving for college. Younger brother Ryan is now a member, too. He has been on an orientation flight in a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter with the Nebraska National Guard.

“One activity our whole family has been involved in is the International Air Cadet Exchange program,” said Tweedt. “We have been a host family for visiting cadets for four out of the last five years.”

1st Lt. Deborah and Capt. Brian Kawaguchi have homeschooled their five children in Washington, with the heart of their teaching being the development of godly character. When their children reached their teens, they required them to participate in an outside activity.

“Though our initial involvement in CAP was to aid our son Paul’s future Air Force career, three of his four siblings joined, too,” said Deborah. “We chose to take part in CAP jointly, to support one another and maintain family unity. We wanted our children to learn how to interact with people outside our family, to build the skills needed



Cadet Maj. Lauren Tweedt, third from left, front, and Cadet 2nd Lt. Eric Tweedt, third from left, back, join other cadets participating in a 2006 International Air Cadet Exchange orientation flight in which two F-117 stealth fighters were refueled in the air. The Australian cadets are in yellow, Canadian cadets are in red and a Japanese cadet is in white.

when transitioning out into the world and to serve their community and country.”

The service aspect also appealed to Cadet 2nd Lt. Elise Pusey of Brooklin, Maine. “Serving my country has always been very important to me,” she said. “One of the primary things that attracted me to CAP was the emphasis on service, and the dedication to excellence which I witnessed in my fellow cadets.”



Cadet 2nd Lt. Elise Pusey

Some CAP squadrons are almost entirely made up of homeschooled students. In Birmingham, Ala., Cadet Capt. Dustin Corey’s squadron consists of about 70 percent homeschoolers, he said, “which gives us the ability to go out and do color guard and other functions outside of normal school hours.”

## FLEXIBLE HOURS AID INVOLVEMENT

The flexibility of homeschooling hours is a boon for CAP involvement.

“We can spend more time on CAP activities that are important to the boys,” said Shelley Unrue, whose three sons, Jon, Sam and Matt, are active in the Kansas Wing’s Emporia Composite Squadron.

“For instance, the Emporia squadron recently won the state color guard competition. Jon coached and Sam and Matt were rifle guards. The Tuesday before the competition we took a holiday (for color guard study and practice) that lasted until the next Tuesday,” she said. “That’s a luxury not available to their public and private school counterparts in CAP.”

Cadet 2nd Lt. April Bartlett of

the Oklahoma Wing's Will Rogers Composite Squadron said home-schooling taught her independence and allowed her "the time to participate and represent CAP in activities public school cadets were not able to attend due to their schedule. Homeschooling also let me customize my classes to focus on my goals."

Her CAP experiences taught her the leadership skills she needed to get promoted at her part-time job. She said one of her most rewarding experiences was CAP's Cadet Officer School, where she learned to "think outside the box."

"The atmosphere of COS was



Cadet 2nd Lt. April Bartlett, right, and her parents, 1st Lt. Nancy Bartlett and 2nd Lt. Tom Bartlett, all with the Oklahoma Wing's Will Rogers Composite Squadron, participated as a family in the 2005 Tinker Air Force Base Aerospace America Air Show.



Homeschooled twin brothers Cadet Lt. Cols. Trent Schill, left, and Noah Schill of the Vermont Wing's Burlington Composite Squadron display the Gen. Billy Mitchell awards they received in 2005.

one of being treated as an adult and being held accountable for our decisions and our actions. We were not looked down upon or babied like many people our age often are," she said.

Students are often able to incorporate CAP into their academic curriculum. Cadet Lt. Col. Trent Schill and his twin brother, cadet Lt. Col. Noah Schill, used their CAP resources to help complete an English assignment. Their task was to write a manual, and they put together a 40-page squadron handbook.

"In it we gathered together

resources and information we thought would be beneficial to new cadets," said Noah. "Since we had only been in the program about six months, we were able to put in everything we found to be valuable."

Cadet Capt. Dustin Corey of Birmingham was able to count his CAP experience as aerospace science credit for high school. Now a student at a junior college, he has earned a flight scholarship, which he is using at the Birmingham Flight Center, where he recently earned his private pilot's license.

Because homeschooling extends beyond academics, CAP is a natural part of homeschooled students' education. "In that respect, CAP has been tremendous in helping me build a strong foundation of character and integrity," said Pusey. "CAP has given me the confidence and skills required to speak publicly, to teach and to lead." ▲



Maryland Wing Cadet Col. Jake Reed receives the Mary Feik Achievement Award from Col. Mary Feik.

*“Civil Air Patrol is important to our family because it underscores many of our values — integrity, self-discipline, leadership and respect. We’ve homeschooled all of our children, and CAP has been an excellent bridge between their home training and their adult lives.”*

*1st Lt. Deborah Kawaguchi, homeschooling mother of five, Washington Wing*