



North Liberty LEADER

NORTH LIBERTY
WEATHER

Today: 10/3/11

High 102°

Low 78°

Sunny



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Getting it Done:

Aug. 26, 2010

By Chris Umscheid

NORTH LIBERTY LEADER



Cadet Staff Sgt. Ethan Serafin (left) and Cadet 2nd Lt. Luke Serafin from rural Shueyville look over a project during a weekly meeting of the Civil Air Patrol's 78th East Iowa Cadet Squadron. The brothers have been members for 1-1/2 (Ethan) and five years respectively. (photo by Chris Umscheid)

CEDAR RAPIDS- Around 6 p.m. on a recent summer evening, a call came in to the United States Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. An Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) had activated somewhere near Waterloo. It was possible the activation was due to an aircraft that had crashed or was otherwise in distress. Soon after, members of the East Iowa Wing of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) were mobilized. With the weather grounding CAP's own planes, senior (adult) and cadet members assembled for a ground search.

As a van with a directional finder headed north, trying to zero-in on the ELT's signal, the weather cleared and an airborne search began as well. CAP volunteer pilots listened for the ELT and guided the van toward the Independence airport.

With permission from airport staff, the ground team found the source of the ELT activation: a plane parked in a hanger. A manual switch had apparently been bumped by a mechanic working on the plane. The ELT was turned off, a note left for the pilot, and the search terminated.

For the adults and teens of the CAP, it was another mission in the log book.

The Civil Air Patrol-officially the United States Air Force Auxiliary- was founded during World War II as civilians were recruited to fly along the nation's coasts looking for enemy vessels. The organization's role expanded to include search and rescue missions for downed aircraft or missing persons, providing emergency communications and increasing the public's awareness of the vital importance of American air and space superiority.

The CAP also devotes much effort to its cadet squadrons, a program for 12-to 21-year-olds interested in aviation and public service. The East Iowa Wing is home to the 78th East Iowa Cadet Squadron, almost 40 members strong and growing.

Cadet Staff Sgt. Ethan Serafin of rural Shueyville said the cadet squadron is developing a culture of excellence. Serafin, a member for a year and a half, credits the squadron for promoting leadership and teamwork.

"It helps to provide a frame for young people" he said, adding that some will go on to join the military, and others won't; but all will benefit from the discipline instilled.

His brother, Cadet 2nd Lt. Luke Serafin, hopes to be a mathematician in a rather disciplined field. He credits

the Squadron for developing character traits that will help him in life. The 2nd Lt. emphasized, "...how good this organization is at showing kids how to act.

"We follow strict customs and courtesies," he said, explaining that members will know how to behave and function in any social or business setting.

A random sampling of the cadets post-school goals show they will likely be found in a wide variety of endeavors. Among the cadet officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are a future software engineer, USAF fighter pilot, another military pilot and a potential future Marine. Other Cadets aspire to travel writing or politics, a future as an Army helicopter pilot or to become a fighter pilot.

Interest in aviation is not a requirement, but it is helpful as the cadets engage in Aerospace Education.

Lt. Francisco Molina, Aerospace Education Officer, explained the cadets go through a curriculum which encompasses aviation history, aerodynamics and physics, building aviation models and model rocketry, and orientation flights with CAP pilots. Through the CAP flight academy, cadets can participate in ground school and flight training, necessary to eventually earn their pilot's license.

Cadets also have the opportunity to attend the National Emergency Services Academy, Ground Team Academy, Cadet Officer School, participate in legislative efforts in Washington, D.C., and even attend survival school. With education and personal advancement come opportunities for promotions and increased responsibilities.

"It's what you get out of it" Lt. Molina said.

A prized opportunity is going to encampment, similar to the National Guard's annual training. The 78th sent six cadets to Camp Ripley, a National Guard training facility in Minnesota, this summer.

"It was a lot of hard work," said Cadet Airman Shauna Holt of Cedar Rapids. She described in great detail the activities and requirements of the encampment including helicopter rides, inspections and many of the same challenges found on the obstacle course used by soldiers. Through it all, teamwork was necessary for success.

"It brought us together like nothing else could," Holt said, explaining that the cadets get each other through even seemingly simple tasks such as housekeeping, bed making and ironing uniforms. The obstacle course, or "O Course," was the true crucible, however, as the cadets joined as one to make it up, over and through the course, encouraging each other the whole way.

"The O Course brought us together," Holt added.

"They are an amazing group of young people, and supporting them has been- and continues to be- very rewarding," Wing Commander Captain Brian Mishmash said of his cadets.