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News

Proud to be a cadet

By Joelyn Hansen/Daily Sun staff writer
 Monday, February 19, 2007 9:29 AM CST

Alec Odom of Beatrice is proud to be a Navy League Cadet.

Odom, 11 and a sixth-grader at St. Joseph's Catholic School, is a member of the Navy League Cadet Corps, a partner of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

He travels to Lincoln at least once a month for the weekend and meets up with about 25 other cadets from around Southeast Nebraska involved in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps Lincoln Squadron.

"They teach us a lot about how the Navy works," Odom said. "It's really fun to know about that."

The NSCC, started in 1958, is for children, ages 13 to 17, who have a desire to learn about the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine. The idea is to teach the youth about naval life and develop a sense of pride, patriotism, courage and self reliance and to maintain an environment free of drugs and gangs.

Children 11 to 13 years old are placed in the NLCC, the junior version of the NSCC. Odom is a Navy Cadet, but plans on becoming a sea cadet when he turns 13.

During the two-day weekend drill that was held this past weekend, students dressed in the same military uniforms as real Navy are taught vast amounts of information, including Navy history, customs and traditions, typing skills, first aid, boats, aircrafts, basic firefighting skills and other essential skills learned by those in the active, reserve and retired military personnel. Everything the youth learn is the same as what real Navy women are learning, Odom said.

They also participate in community service.

This past weekend's training included flagship skills, knot tying, first aid, color guard, uniform care and personal hygiene.

Sea cadets also spend some of the time studying and taking tests on Naval skills and information, so if they do wish to join the military in the future, they'll have a head start.



Lt. Cmdr. Lisa Lewis works with Navy Cadet Alec Odom during a course of instruction. Odom is a member of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps Lincoln Squadron. Photo by Joelyn Hansen/Daily Sun staff

It can be a lot of fun to learn about all of that, Odom said, but for him the best part is the camaraderi friends he has made while in the program.

"It's pretty good," Odom said. "You make a Because of that, Odom said he usually enj minute of the weekend, including getting up to exercise. It is something he doesn't have enjoys.

"They learn honor, courage, commitment a control," Caprice Houdek, Odom's mother : officer over the NLCC, said of the weekenc kids do really well."

The program also promotes and teaches a patriotism, with the cadets attending speci the opportunity to present the colors at ma including Salt Dog baseball games, Lincolr games and numerous parades and events

Houdek first became involved in the NSCC years ago. Her husband, Jeff, has been in the U.S. Navy for 22 years and she has been a Navy Res past five years. She also became involved because her daughter, Christine Casement, a Beatrice H graduate and current member of the U.S. Marine Corps, was in NSCC.

As a leader in the program, Houdek says she has been working on trying to get more Beatrice and a involved in the program because of the values it teaches and the self esteem it gives children.

"This is a definite boost of confidence," Houdek said. "They definitely get a better sense of confidenc

Houdek has passed out many pamphlets to parents and students interested in the program.

It also offers those who would like to go into the U.S. Navy special benefits, like an automatic pay in opportunities at leadership positions. But, there is no obligation to join, Houdek said.

"Only about 5 percent actually join the military," Houdek said.

Lincoln Squadron Lt. Comdr. Lisa Lewis said the NSCC is probably the Navy's best kept secret.

The program is structured in the same chain of command the Navy uses, Lewis said. This allows for earn rank and be promoted throughout the program.

NSCC offers participants chances to attend boot camp, mini naval cruises and other Naval training c they're interest in, Lewis said. For example, this year, they have three cadets who are interested in t training.

For students who are interested in joining the military, it's a great way to find out what military life is l said.

"It's a great try it before you buy it," Lewis said.

The program does have strict guidelines. There is a a zero tolerance policy for drugs, alcohol and g; also a grade policy that prohibits cadets from participating in activities and events if their grades at s below a certain mark.

"Everything we are doing is to help them become a better person," Lewis said.

For Lewis, the program is not a way to get children to join the military in the future, but helping them better people and better citizens.

"I don't care if they join the military," Lewis said. "I do this to watch them grow as people."

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