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Shea-Porter, Gregg nominate New Castle teen for Naval Academy

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Alyson DeLeeuw, 18, of New Castle, has been nominated to the U.S. Naval Academy.

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By **Abbie Hackett**

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NEW CASTLE — Alyson De Leeuw has been part of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets since she was 10. At 11, she became an expert in pistols and rifles, and at 12, she knew she wanted to attend the U.S. Naval Academy.

Over the next few years, the New Castle native paid her own way through two dozen Sea Cadet training sessions. At 17, she was chosen out of 200 applicants to rappel seaside cliffs in Australia, was promoted to chief, and was awarded Battalion Honor Company Commander.

In December, a month after turning 18, De Leeuw was nominated by Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., and Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter, D-N.H., to attend the U.S. Naval Academy this fall.

"Alyson is extremely qualified, and I was delighted to nominate her," Shea-Porter said. "My nomination board, which is composed of former and currently serving military officers, recognized her leadership qualities."

Just back from a week at the Petty Officer Leadership Academy in Newport, R.I., De Leeuw acknowledged she has worked hard for her nominations, which are required to apply to four out of the five service academies, including the Naval Academy. Her hard work and commitment have not gone unnoticed.

"This is all me," the Phillips Exeter Academy high honors senior said with a laugh, turning serious, "I really hope I get in." She recounted how her mother, Nancy, a 30-year Air Force veteran, would ask if she was sure she wanted to spend so much time with the Sea Cadet program instead of hanging out with her friends.

"It's always been like this; if it's something I want to do, I will find a way to do it," De Leeuw said.

De Leeuw's cell phone buzzed twice during the interview before she gave in and looked to see who was trying to reach her. Her home phone rang, and she jumped up to peer at the caller ID. She knows any phone call or letter she receives between now and April could announce her acceptance to the academy.

De Leeuw's lacrosse coach, Amy Schwartz, said she is not surprised De Leeuw was nominated by the senator and congresswoman. Schwartz praised De Leeuw's leadership role as a "strong attacker with a fast shot." She said De Leeuw has "a strong character and a strong sense of what she wants to get out of life."

Schwartz said De Leeuw is also the first to cheer on and encourage her teammates.

De Leeuw's team-focused attitude is how she became named Battalion Honor Company Commander, a special distinction made only once each year. Calling this accolade her "greatest achievement," De Leeuw said it not only meant she "worked the hardest and trained cadets the best," but also that her new cadets were duly recognized for their hard work.

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg on Wednesday announced the Seacoast students he nominated to enter the U.S. Air Force, Naval, Army and Merchant Marine academies in July 2010.

Gregg nominated De Leeuw, Jordan McCarthy of East Kingston and Brett Ruggles of North Hampton for the Navy; Nolan Maynard of Hampton Falls for the Air Force; and Joseph Nyhan of North Hampton for West Point.

"The young people selected this year have excellent academic records and a broad range of interests, pursuits, extracurricular activities and athletic achievements," Gregg said. "They all have the potential to win appointment to the academies and the promise of enjoying an outstanding military career."

Selection of nominees is based on a composite of academic factors including school records, class rank, SAT scores and leadership potential, extracurricular activities, athletics, physical fitness and recommendations.