


[Print Page](#)

## Getting their sea legs

By KAREN LONG - [klong@kcchronicle.com](mailto:klong@kcchronicle.com)

Comments (No comments posted.)

Mike Bellavia's interest in flying influenced his family's trips to museums.

Steven Bellavia planned to go into the Navy by the time he was in middle school.

Now students at Geneva High School, the brothers learn leadership skills and receive military training, without the commitment of enlisting, through the U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Corps.

During training twice a month and in summer camps, 17-year-old Mike and 16-year-old Steven practice Navy and Marine Corps drills and learn about the military branches. The program is available to 13- to 17-year-olds.

"There's a lot of leadership training," Mike said, adding that he learned skills that helped with baby-sitting and team activities at school.

They even learn how to iron as a way to take care of their uniforms.

"It really makes you feel good about yourself and how you present yourself," Mike said.

The summer training camps give cadets experience with Navy jobs, Steven said. He and Mike have participated in construction battalion training, which Mike said included community service work and team building. Steven also has completed seamanship training in which he practiced sailing, docking and knot-tying on a boat. Mike has participated in plane captain training in Jacksonville, Fla.

Some people might think that the brothers followed in their older sister Kim's footsteps – Kim is enlisted in the U.S. Navy and training at Naval Station Great Lakes – but she joined after Mike and Steven had started in the Sea Cadet program.

"We taught her the basics," Steven said.

Steven and Mike, who joined Navy Sea Cadets in 2005, haven't decided their future plans. Mike said he planned to study aerospace engineering in college and join Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or ROTC. Steven said his interests might have switched from the Navy to the Coast Guard or law enforcement.

Their mother, Rhonda Bellavia, said the cadet experience working with active-duty servicemen and women and training in military settings would help her sons decide whether to enlist.

"They know; they've lived on bases," she said. "They've been there."

For more information on the U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Corps, log onto [www.seacadets.org](http://www.seacadets.org)



Navy Sea Cadets Mike Bellavia, left, and his brother Steven, of Geneva, practice drills at Naperville Central High School Saturday. (Bob Gerrard photo)

## COMMENTS

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