

NEWS

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These sea cadets are also proud to serve

By Phyllis Edwards , STAFF WRITER

Cadets from a local unit of the U.S. Navy Sea Cadets, named for a World War II destroyer escort, are carrying on the tradition of Training Ship Mason DE 529.

"T.S. Mason DE 529 was the only African-American manned ship in World War II," Lt. Tonette Pray said.

"They won an award for service during the storm of the century but they never received the medal for 50 years."

A book was written about these men, "Proudly We Served, the Men of the Training Ship Mason." It was made into a movie starring Ossie Davis.

A former Navy man, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-7), spoke at the banquet. State Sen. Anthony Williams (D-8) swore in new cadets. William Penn School Superintendent Dana Bedden presented service awards.

About 25 cadets, age 11 to 13, meet twice-monthly at the Philadelphia Naval Business Center on the grounds of the former Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The unit originally met at Penn Wood Middle School in Darby.

"We had to find a new meeting place when they remodeled the school three years ago," Lt. Pray said.

The Sea Cadets are frequently called upon to do color guard duties.

"We do a lot of programs. We just did color guarding for the National Constitution Center when they gave out the Congressional Medal. We get a lot of requests like that," Lt Pray said.

"We are sponsored by the Philadelphia Navy League," she said.

Edwards Bailey and Whitly Gardner received recruit certificates at the banquet. Most improved cadets were Khyere Thomas and Kushmir Harris-Miller. The Leadership Award was presented to Patrick Pray and Brandon Parker. The Most Squared Away Award went to Christopher Dugan, Darren Rainey, Whitly Gardner and Brandon Parker.

Patrick Pray, N'Chi Clark, Whitly Gardner and Darren Rainey were recognized for perfect attendance.

Color Guard Awards were given to Christopher Dugan, Darren Rainey, Whitly Gardner, Brandon Parker, Patrick Pray, Andre F Anthony Clark.

Receiving the Unit Commendation were Christopher Dugan, Darren Rainey, Whitly Gardner, Brandon Parker, Patrick Pray, Ar Bennett and Anthony Clark.

Christopher Dugan received the Academic Achievement Award. Whitly Gardner was named Cadet of the Quarter. Darren Rainey named Outstanding Cadet of the Year. Christopher Dugan was named Regional Director's Cadet of the Year.

Parent Appreciation Awards were given to Marie Dugan and Dionne Clark.

