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From sea to shining sea...

By: KRISTIAN GOVE

WICKFORD - From wild blue yonder to deep blue sea, Petty Officer Second Class Evan Vernon hopped a plane Monday to Portugal, where he will embark on a seafaring world tour.

Vernon is nearing completion of his training as a Sea Cadet in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (USNSCC). Vernon, who just celebrated his 18th birthday, lives in Coventry, and just graduated Coventry High School this year. He spent the summer learning how to sail traditionally with yacht owner Doug Somers on the Brandaris, which calls Wickford Harbor home.

Last Thursday, several Cadets and their commander CWO-2 David Kernwood, were on hand to celebrate his achievement and provide an official send off.

Vernon was one of only two cadets who will be touring several nations on the Coast Guard training vessel the Barque Eagle. The Eagle will visit ports in Rota, Spain; Madeira, Portugal; the Canary Islands and Bermuda. The ship, which serves as a floating classroom, will bring Vernon back to the United States on Sept. 9 in New London, Conn.

Vernon is part of the Rhode Island chapter of the USNSCC, which is based locally at Quonset Point and headed up by Kernwood. The Cadet program is federally funded and for students aged 11 to 17. The Cadet program funded Vernon's trip entirely. For more information on the program, you can visit their web site at www.riseacadets.org.

Of Vernon, Kernwood said this: "He has well earned this ride - it is a fantastic way for this young man to finish his Sea Cadet career."

Kernwood presented Vernon with a challenge coin inscribed with two sayings. One side of the coin said, "United together in the fight against terrorism," and the reverse said, "We will never forget September 11, 2001."

Kernwood said that theme of this year's training program was homeland security and the global war on terror.

The USNSCC is also currently hosting a group of six international sea cadets from all over the world including Sweden, Singapore, Canada, Korea, Australia and the United Kingdom. In all, 32 international cadets will participate in a number of activities over the next couple of weeks. Their training will include port security plans and the program includes a visit to the Coast Guard facilities in Boston.

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