



Serving Central Michigan

[News](#)

Vestaburg teen is involved with several organizations



[Click to enlarge](#)

Monday, September 29, 2008 5:58 AM EDT

BY PATRICIA ECKER
Sun Staff Writer

A Vestaburg teenager thinks "as humans, we rarely push ourselves to our limits or beyond," but in her case, that is not true.

Seventeen-year-old Joy Caris, a senior at Vestaburg High School, member of the cross country and track teams, the National Honor Society, and the Model United Nations organizations has three older brothers, loves to watch movies and take naps.

In her spare time, she trains in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

This past summer there were seven days in a 75-day span where she was away from home because of her extra curricular activities.

Caris began her summer by volunteering as a song leader at bible school for her church, and she took part in a political Girl's State forum in Lansing where she debated and stood in a model political system.

Q: When did you first get involved with the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps?

A: Officially in December 2004. Captain John Smith came to my school and did a presentation where he stressed that the program offers leadership training and discipline- both of which I wanted and knew I needed.

Q: What is the organization's purpose?

A: In compliance with the Navy and organizational structure: to teach teens leadership, gain military knowledge and (real life) experience, learn about being a member of a team, train them in seagoing skills, and to teach them patriotism, courage, and self-reliance.

Q: What is your rank, and how did you achieve that level?

A: I am a chief petty officer, which I explain to all of my friends that chief is the highest level in the Sea Cadets after going through six other ranks. I had to go to a few required trainings; boot camp, Petty Officer Leadership Academy and be a staff cadet (be in charge of developing) Sea Cadets at their boot camp.

I also had to complete lots of book work along with tests and time in rate. That's just the Navy way of saying I had to wait six months in between each rank (E-1, E-2, E-3....) before advancing. Finally had to be recommended by Capt. Smith and be approved by the Sea Cadet's National Headquarters.

Q: What keeps you involved with the organization?

A: I absolutely love it. I have a passion for seeing a positive change in people, seeing a team come together, being apart of something bigger than myself.

I have gone all over the country and world (Australia) with the Sea Cadets and I have been given amazing opportunities to learn hands on with the latest technology and equipment. I also love how while learning I am bettering myself, teaching others and learning more about leadership than reading a hundred books.

It's a great deal of fun and I've met hundreds of people from all over the country and world through Sea Cadets.

Q. What are some of the training and exercises you do with the group?

A: This summer I went to Mt. Pleasant to staff two trainings that were happening: Petty Officer Leadership Academy and Master-At-Arms training.

I also went to South Carolina in Fort Jackson where I was the leading Sea Cadet at a Boot Camp and was in charge of the staff cadets and the recruits.

I went Fort Lewis, Washington for a Field Medical Training that gave a life-like feel for what real corpsman train like. It focused on four components: Physical (obstacle courses, running, pushups), Academics (used the same manual real Corpsman use, 32 tests, one final test), Field (field tactics, living and operations, shooting M16s), and Medical (IVs, gun-shot wounds, combat-like situations, basic first aid, CPR).

On a smaller scale two weekends a month we have Saturday drills. This weekend we will be at Camp Rotary along with Sea Cadets all over the state of Michigan for a hands-on leadership training.

In March, Sea Cadets from various locations in Michigan come to Mt. Pleasant to compete in Navy skills, academic knowledge of the Sea Cadets/Navy and in various competitions.

(Other trainings I've done: medical training, cook/steward school, two other Petty Officer Leadership Academies, International Exchange Programs (I went to Australia, many other available countries), Master-at-Arms training, staffed a league-cadet boot camp and a Sea Cadet boot camp, and went aboard the Grayfox- USNSCC ship- and trained for ten days.)

Q: What are three skills you attribute to your training in the sea cadet?

A: Leadership. Discipline. Teamwork.

Q: How have they enhanced your life?

A: I am able to use what I have learned to discipline myself to complete the tasks that don't interest me. Leadership has helped me set and be the example that I need to be.

Following is inseparable to leading: one cannot lead before being led. Teamwork: the more I go to trainings the more I realize that anything great and worthy of accomplishment requires a team which requires a lot of team work. Dealing with people is something I do everyday and if I can get better at it, the better team we will be and the better leader I will become.

Q: Do you plan on a career in the military?

A: Yes. I plan to attend two years of college (nursing) and perhaps be apart of an ROTC (Reserved Officer Training Corps) program and then apply to the Army's Military Academy: West Point. After which I plan to serve the definite five year commitment and then I decide from that point in my life.

Q: How important are leadership skills to women?

A: They are just as important to women as they are men. It's been exciting to see the movements in society

and women have been playing a larger and larger role.

Leadership is sometimes an over-used intimidating word: take a stand, be willing to lead people, have compassion, every mistake learn from it, and strive for knowledge to become more effective.

Q: Where will you be a year from now?

A: I am undecided still about the exact college I want to attend, but I want to attend a college that offers nursing and ROTC.

I plan to be the assistant coach for VHS's cross country team and be training for my first marathon.

Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of themorningsun.com.

Audrey wrote on Sep 29, 2008 7:06 AM:

" Way to go Joy! Keep up the great work Your Dad must be so proud of you, as Chuck and I are. :) "

[Report Abuse](#)

Ashlie wrote on Sep 29, 2008 9:01 AM:

" Joy- I have so much respect for you. Keep it up! "

[Report Abuse](#)

anonymyous wrote on Sep 29, 2008 10:08 AM:

" So proud to have such a wondrful person in our small town. And she's only a senior in high school. This young woman is sure to make a difference in our world! "

[Report Abuse](#)

Bekki wrote on Sep 30, 2008 9:49 AM:

" Awesome! Keep up the great work. "

[Report Abuse](#)

Sharon Gerlach wrote on Sep 30, 2008 2:34 PM:

" We are so proud of Joy here at Vestaburg High School!!! She has a great personality and is a wonderful role model. There's no doubt you will read about her in the years to come!! "

[Report Abuse](#)

ENS Aylor wrote on Oct 1, 2008 3:22 PM:

" Very well said, and it has been an outstanding pleasure being able to watch Chief Caris grow over the past four years. "

[Report Abuse](#)

Submit a Comment

We encourage your feedback and dialog and ask you to follow a few simple guidelines when commenting on stories on themorningsun.com.

- 1) Please post responsibly.
- 2) Be polite.
- 3) Don't hate.
- 4) If you object to someone's post, use the "Report Abuse" button and we'll review it.
- 5) Users who don't play by the rules will be blocked and won't be allowed to participate.

Name:

Email: (optional)

Comments:

Image Verification: 