

NJROTC shows cadets what it's like to be in the military

By Anya Davenport, Michala Hardin

"By the left flank...march," exclaims junior Jake Patton to the second-period Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps platoon.

Patton is a senior chief petty officer of the JROTC program. His rank allows him to order cadets around. The NJROTC is an award-winning FC program. The program has been awarded for their drill team, color guard, rifle team, and physical training team.

The NJROTC program is run by the senior naval science instructor Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mike Epperson and naval science instructor Senior Chief Michael Beal.

"I want cadets to learn how to be a leader, how to live their lives under the core values of honor, courage, and commitment, and to think about their future employment or education," said Beal.

NJROTC isn't all about the hard work. The cadets get to have fun with it too.

"ROTC gave my high school experience purpose. With the 45-minute class period I get to go downstairs each day and it makes my day worth it. I always leave with a smile," said senior Olivia Appel.

Cadets also say they have an easy time doing some of the things the class does.

Freshman Dakota Uhl said how the easiest part about JROTC is the two days a week where they do physical training in the Galena gym.

Cadets also say how some activities are harder than other classes at schools.

"The hardest part of JROTC is learning how to respect peoples choices and decisions," said Patton.

The physical training days for JROTC are Mondays and Fridays.

"We train two days a week, go to the gym at Galena. On Monday we do stretching, warm ups, and some strength and cardio exercises. Fridays we do something fun but it's cardio. We invent competitions, anywhere from dodgeball to relay races," said Beal.

The NJROTC also wears uniforms every Wednesday for both inspection and loyalty. Cadets say that the uniform teaches them discipline.

"They get to wear uniforms because it shows them to be responsible. It shows self discipline and how to take care of the uniform. A small part of what it takes to be in the military," said Beal.

Freshman Tyler Wilson said he enjoys wearing his



Anya Davenport/Journalism

Chief warrant officer 4 Mike Epperson gives advice to the seventh JROTC platoon on how to march more professional and look better. This is practice for the Annual Military Inspection February 4, 2015. "My favorite part about marching is I get to show Gunner what I can do with marching. Also if he sees and he compliments on it then I know I've done a good job," said freshman Dakota Uhl.

Photo by Anya Davenport

uniform on Wednesdays because he doesn't have to choose what to wear, but it's also a lot of work.

The NJROTC also has after-school teams. The teams are rifle, drill, and color guard. They are also optional to anyone in the program. Cadets earn ribbons from the meets that the teams go to and for being on the team as well. There are also other ways to earn the ribbons for the uniforms.

"Well, each of them were earned with hard work. I put myself in a position to set myself apart and I did, so I was awarded for that," said Patton.

Anyone can join JROTC that would like to try, and it's open for everyone in all grades. Sophomore Nick Fulkerson said the program is a lot of fun and he enjoys it very much.

"Anybody can take this class that is not physically

hampered. It takes the cadet wearing the uniform every Wednesday, respectful attitudes to fellow cadets and instructors, and giving full effort in any assignment they are given," said Beal.

The cadets say their favorite part about JROTC is being able to make friends and making memories while in the class.

"The friends I made and rifle team. The instructors are really personable too. They really make you feel welcome," said Appel. "I first joined ROTC because my brother just joined the National Guard, and I was all military inspired. The camp I went to after freshman year in the mountains of West Virginia. We got to do stuff that we would never get the chance to do such as white water rafting, skeet shooting, and rock wall climbing. It was a blast!"