

# Civil Air Patrol teens gain an advantage in everyday life

**C**aitlin Cecil could be spending this particularly sticky Thursday night at the movies. She could be at a friend's house playing Wii or eating French fries on the boardwalk. Instead, Cecil is dressed in fatigues, sandy hair tucked under a military-style cap, walking through drills with other identically dressed teenagers on an asphalt parking lot near the Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport.

Cecil is an Airman 1st Class with the Wicomico Civil Air Patrol. She is 16, but shows no signs of awkward teenager-ness; the only real clue to her youth is the chipped orange nail polish on her short fingernails. She speaks with enthusiasm about her goal to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University after high school, punctuating each

sentence with "ma'am." "Yes, ma'am, I'd like to become a pilot," she said. "I'm just not sure how to get there yet."

The Civil Air Patrol was founded nearly 67 years ago as the official auxiliary of the United States Air Force. Members are civilian volunteers who assist with search and rescue missions, disaster relief and homeland security. Students as young as 12 can join CAP as cadets. Cecil was 15 when she got involved with the local squadron.

"I just love it," she said. "It's taught me so much about leadership. And a lot about self respect."

Nearby in the CAP trailer, Lt. Bob Bryant is showing off a balsa wood model airplane he pieced together earlier in the afternoon. The cadets' summer project, he said, will be to build their own control line planes and learn how to

fly them. Bryant, once a junior high school CAP cadet (and now manager of Salisbury's airport), is the squadron's aerospace instructor. He introduces the cadets to everything from rockets and space to planes and weather. And demonstrates how much fun it can be.

"Today everything is so computer-oriented. I want them to build things, to set a

**See PATROL, Page D2**

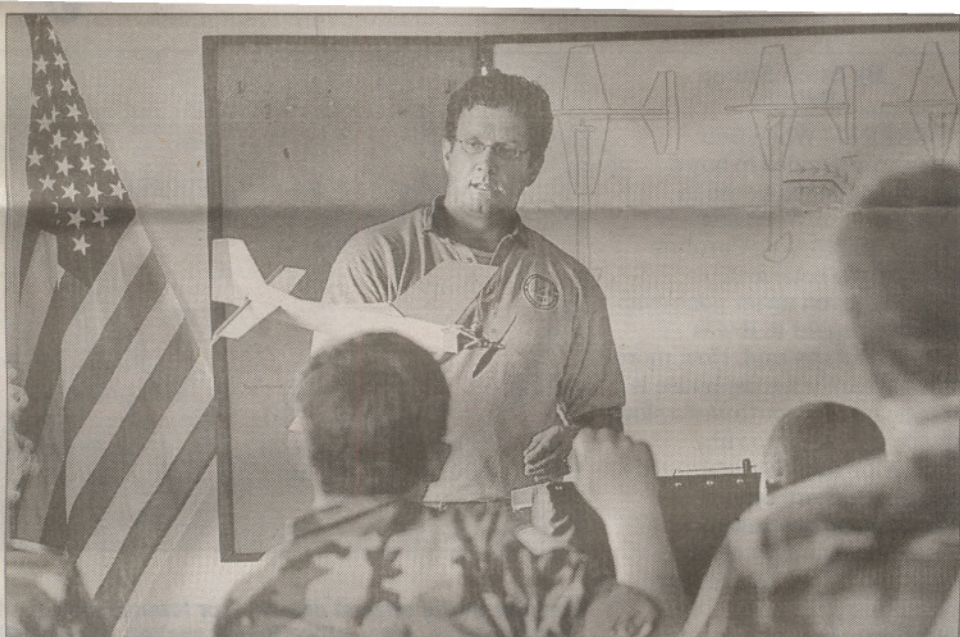


Jackie Jennings is looking for unusual stories about life on Delmarva. E-mail her at [jjennings@DelmarvaNow.com](mailto:jjennings@DelmarvaNow.com) or call 410-749-7171, Ext. 350.



Laura Emmons photo

**Civil Air Patrol cadets march during a drill at the Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport.**



Laura Emmons photo

**Bob Bryant explains to a class of Civil Air Patrol cadets the importance of hands-on learning through the use of airplane and rocket models.**

## Patrol

**From Page D1**

goal to build something that's supposed to fly and actually see it work. That was one of the biggest thrills I had as a kid," said Bryant.

Earlier this year, the cadets built a working rocket designed to compete in the 2008 Team America Rocketry Challenge. The competition invites students from across the country to construct a device that will carry two raw eggs to an altitude of 750 feet, then return them to Earth intact, all within 45 seconds. While working on the rocket, the cadets got a tough lesson in trial and error.

"You should have heard the oohs and aahs when that thing was going up with flames coming out of everywhere except where they were supposed to," said Bryant. "It was one of those moments when the cadets had a problem and they had to overcome it and build something new."

With just three weeks left before the contest, the cadets rallied to create a new rocket that got its payload back on the ground safely. In competition, the rocket managed an altitude of 880 feet, and the team placed a respectable 82nd

in the contest.

"We put a rocket together using common sense," said 15-year-old cadet Zack Jones. "I wish more people knew about CAP. I can't really think of anything else I'd rather be doing."

"I also think what the kids get out of it — besides the aviation component — is they like to see adults who are interested in them," said Bryant. "We can bring them some fun projects they may never have had the opportunity to do." (And it may get a whole lot more fun. The Wicomico CAP is scheduled to get a Cessna in about a month; cadets

are eligible for five free airplane rides each year.)

Cecil, who plans to pursue a military career while flying, said the Civil Air Patrol gives her an advantage other teenagers may not have — not just in aviation, but in everything she does.

"Before I met anyone in Civil Air Patrol, no teenager had ever shaken my hand. I remember the first time I came here everyone did and I was so impressed. Everyone shows respect. It just goes such a long way in everyday life."

For more information, visit [www.wscap.org](http://www.wscap.org).

