

Congressional Gold

Medal Winners



By Kristi Carr

Each with his own style,
two CAP members
bring home the gold

Two Civil Air Patrol volunteers — Cadet Sr. Master Sgt. Kyle Fitle of Cypress, Calif., and Capt. Timothy Medeiros of St. Petersburg, Fla. — have been awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress' highest honor for young people ages 14-23.

Fitle and Medeiros were among 237 winners named in 2008. The award, signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, recognizes those who set and reach goals in four areas — public service, personal development, physical fitness and expedition/exploration. Since its inception, the award has translated into more than 2 million volunteer hours in community service performed by its honorees in addition to their personal achievements.

The fast track

Fitle, 19, is a member of the California Wing's Los Alamitos Cadet Squadron 153. He dreams of becoming a fighter pilot, and he hopes his involvement in CAP will help him achieve that goal.

Fitle said the Congressional Medal has three levels — bronze, silver and gold. When he set his sights on the medal, he also committed to fulfilling the requirements for all three levels.

His public service work included volunteering at CAP air shows, working at a shelter for abused women and their children and helping with international aid and children's programs.

For a personal goal, Fitle enhanced his guitar-playing skills, and for the physical fitness goal, he improved his soccer game, mostly as a defender.

"I learned the most," he said, "from the Congressional Medal's expedition/exploration requirement." An overnight bicycle trip met the bronze-level requirements; he went on to achieve silver-level status by attending CAP's Hawk Mountain Ranger School, which concentrates heavily on search and rescue.

"I found out I could push myself further than I thought possible," he said, adding, "it was more a mental than a physical challenge."

Fitle met the gold-level standard by spending two weeks in Romania.

Slow and steady

Methodical by nature, Medeiros, now a senior member serving as drug demand reduction administrator for CAP's Florida Wing, took a slower path to the Congressional Gold Medal, beginning the process six years ago, when he was 16. By that time, he'd been a CAP

cadet for three years, attracted, like Fitle, to CAP's connection to the military and the prospect of flying.

"I have always set goals, both long-term and short-term," he said. "I try to make it a game, much like a treasure hunt. Each phase of the long-term goal has smaller goals which help keep me motivated to reach the end."

He applied this strategy to CAP's Gen. Carl A. Spaatz Award and earned that honor — the organization's highest recognition for cadets — in December 2005.

To meet the public service component for the Gold Medal, Medeiros made a four-year commitment to provide Thanksgiving meals to the needy through the Salvation Army, which he credits for supporting his mother and him when his father died.

"I learned bad things do happen to good people, and you never know if you are going to need assistance," he said. He was especially pleased to find his work inspired some of the recipients to give back to the community when their circumstances improved.

In addition, he became a CAP honor guardsman,



Congressional Gold Medal winner CAP Capt. Timothy Medeiros, above and at right, spent two weeks in Cairo, Egypt, as part of the inaugural Peace Camp hosted by People to People International and Suzanne Mubarak, wife of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak



Photo courtesy of Deborah Medeiros