

The BEST Meets the BEST

Northeast Region color guard,
Rocky Mountain Region drill team
take top honors at 2009
National Cadet Competition



By Capt. James Ridley Sr.

They came close the previous two years, but the third time was the charm for the Northeast Region's color guard, which — along with the Rocky Mountain Region drill team — got a chance to hoist the 3-foot U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Sweepstakes Trophy in victory at Civil Air Patrol's 2009 National Cadet Competition in McMinnville, Ore.

The Northeast Region color guard champions, who hail from New York Wing's Academy Cadet Squadron in New York City, competed against teams from the seven other regions. Events included a uniform inspection, a mile run and both indoor and outdoor military drill routines, such as posting and retrieving the American flag. Cadets were also tested on their knowledge of customs, courtesies and Air Force and CAP history through a written exam and on their knowledge of aerospace through a panel quiz similar to TV's "Jeopardy."

Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force Gen. William M. Fraser III was the guest of honor at the awards banquet, where the winners were announced

following four days of competition at Linfield College and Evergreen Air & Space Museum.

"The Northeast Region color guard took first in five categories," said then-Northeast Region Commander Col. Robert Diduch, "and No. 1 overall in the competition. We're very proud of them."

The Pacific Region color guard took home second-place honors, while the Southeast Region team finished third.

The National Cadet Competition, or NCC as it is known to cadets, is held each summer after teams compete at both the wing and region levels to earn the right to compete nationally. Some even begin the journey by competing in a group-level competition. Because it takes so much time and hard work just to get to NCC, the event is often billed as "the Best Meets the Best."

"Although champions have been chosen for this event, everyone involved in the competition is a winner," said CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter, who attended the competition and the awards banquet. "It takes intense dedication and

Cadet 1st Lt. Rae Niedfeldt, left, and Cadet Capt. Arielle Weeks, members of Civil Air Patrol's championship drill team, celebrate their team's first-place finish in the 2009 National Cadet Competition by posing in front of the 3-foot U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Sweepstakes Trophy. The Utah Wing cadets and their teammates representing the Rocky Mountain Region took top honors during four days of competition at Linfield College and the Evergreen Air & Space Museum in McMinnville, Ore. The names of the championship drill team and the winning color guard, the Northeast Region team from the New York Wing, were placed on the trophy.



Photo by Capt. James Kalemis, Illinois Wing

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Cadet Maj. Cheston Newhall, front center, stands at attention with other cadets from CAP's Utah Wing drill team during the 2009 National Cadet Competition. After placing third in 2008, the group from CAP's Rocky Mountain Region took home top honors this year, giving Utah its first national drill team title in more than 50 years.

skill to reach the national competition. They should all be proud of their efforts.”

Every team competing in the NCC worked and practiced hard to get this far, and for 2009 at least, the Northeast Region color guard can lay claim to being the very best, as can the Rocky Mountain Region's drill team.

Made up of 14 cadets from the Utah Wing, the Rocky Mountain Region drill team won four of the seven contests, including the volleyball tournament, on its way to becoming the 2009 national drill team champion. It was the Utah Wing's first drill team national title since 1956.

The Middle East Region's drill team finished second; the



Photo by Capt. Michael Lee, New York Wing

Members of the New York Wing's winning color guard — clockwise, from left, Cadet Master Sgt. Zin Han, Cadet Senior Airman Jason Chan, Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Macrini and Cadet Staff Sgt. Albaro Pillco — compete during the outdoor practical event at the 2009 National Cadet Competition in McMinnville, Ore. The four young men are members of the Academy Cadet Squadron in New York City.

Southeast Region team was third.

Fraser, the honorary speaker at the awards banquet, arrived a day before the event and observed several activities in addition to talking to the cadets and their parents and taking the competition photo in front of Howard Hughes' famed Spruce Goose. "Gen. Fraser is the highest-level official we have ever had at the National Cadet Competition," said Lt. Col. Roger Middleton, director of NCC. "We were very proud to have him."

Members of the Air Force Junior ROTC from Federal Way, Wash., served as staff for NCC. "We were there to observe and learn about the Civil Air Patrol program, to seek more information about the color guards and drill teams and to help where we could," said Air Force Junior ROTC Cadet Chief

Master Sgt. Marie Gutierrez.

Like the New York Wing color guard, the number 3 was important to the Utah Wing drill team, too. In the 2008 competition, the team finished third nationally. Cadet Maj. Cheston Newhall, who served as commander of the 2008 drill team, wasn't going to settle for third again. He began working the team in August of last year — five months earlier than usual — in preparation for the 2009 competition.

Team members met nearly every weekend for more than 10 months at the CAP hangar at Salt Lake City International Airport for training sessions. They practiced marching, exercised for the physical fitness challenges and studied for the written test and panel quiz. "Everyone knew we were serious about it," said Newhall. "You saw people sacrificing for the team."



Photo by Capt. James Kalamis, Illinois Wing

The more than 150 youth participating in Civil Air Patrol's 2009 National Cadet Competition line up in formation for a photo with CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter, front right, and other dignitaries inside the Evergreen Air & Space Museum in McMinnville, Ore. Behind the cadets is Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose, a prototype heavy transport World War II-era aircraft that is the museum's centerpiece.



Cadet Staff Sgt. Frank Albrecht, left, and Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Reuben Miller, both members of the North Central Region color guard, confer during the panel quiz portion of the National Cadet Competition. The panel quiz tested the cadets' knowledge of aviation with a game similar to "Jeopardy."

Everybody put drill team first."

Cadet Capt. Arielle Weeks said the weekend sessions were well worth the effort. "Every week brought a new challenge to the team," she said. "We knew that was the level of commitment it was going to take to win. We did it right." ▲

Capt. James Kalemis of CAP's Great Lakes Region, public affairs officer for the 2009 National Cadet Competition, and Natalie Dicou of The Salt Lake City Tribune contributed to this report.

NCC sponsors

- Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum
- Linfield College
- Cessna
- Sprint
- Oregon National Guard
- McMinnville Fire Department

Cadet 2nd Lt. Joshua Davidson, left, stands at attention while U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Eddie Moses inspects his uniform during the 2009 National Cadet Competition. Davidson commanded the Southeast Region drill team, which finished third in the competition.

Members of the winning NCC teams:

Northeast Region Color Guard

NEW YORK

- Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Thomas Macrini, Academy Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Master Sgt. Zin Han, Academy Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Staff Sgt. Albaro Pillco, Academy Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Senior Airman Jason Chan, Academy Cadet Squadron

Rocky Mountain Region Drill Team

UTAH

- Cadet Maj. Cheston Newhall, Thunderbird Composite Squadron
- Cadet Capt. Sean Carlisi, Weber Minuteman Composite Squadron
- Cadet Capt. Cole Christensen, Thunderbird Composite Squadron
- Cadet Capt. Brayden Mickelson, Cache Valley Composite Squadron
- Cadet Capt. Arielle Weeks, Thunderbird Composite Squadron
- Cadet 1st Lt. Cassie Carlisi, Weber Minuteman Composite Squadron
- Cadet 1st Lt. Rae Niedfeldt, Phantom Cadet Squadron
- Cadet 2nd Lt. Grant Taylor, Blackhawk Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Jared Healey, Phantom Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Zach Hopkins, Cache Valley Composite Squadron
- Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Stefani Lewis, Cache Valley Composite Squadron
- Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Joseph Goldberg, Thunderbird Composite Squadron
- Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Richard Luby, Phantom Cadet Squadron
- Cadet Master Sgt. McKelle Tobey, Cache Valley Composite Squadron

