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Alaska National Guard

*Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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By David McPhetres

Director, AMYA

Contact: 907-428-7306

Alaska Military Youth Academy starts first class of 2020

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – The Alaska Military Youth Academy campus was quiet last week. There were no cadence calls or marching commands echoing between the buildings. That changed Feb. 12 when 163 candidates for AMYA’s 54th class arrived here from throughout the state.

The teenagers are on day two of a voluntary journey to see if they have what it takes to graduate from Alaska’s toughest quasi-military residential training school for 16- through 18-year-old high-risk youth who have struggled to succeed in high school. The program is provided through a cooperative agreement between the state of Alaska and the National Guard Bureau’s Youth Challenge program at no cost to the candidates.

The 22-week program begins with a two-week acclimation phase that challenges the candidates to determine if they have the commitment and dedication to become cadets. It’s overwhelming for some, and staff are trained to assist in the transition. The candidate’s world changes immediately: no internet or phones, no caffeine, no drugs or alcohol, and a regimented physically active schedule that begins at 6 a.m. and ends with lights out at 10 pm. They follow a strict cadet manual which addresses behavior, dress, appearance, and discipline. Their meals and snacks are provided by the dining facility at set times during the day. This phase ends when they earn the right to be called AMYA cadets.

Candidates choose to participate for a variety of reasons, with different goals that the program can help them accomplish. AMYA provides cadets opportunities for academic excellence, physical fitness, job skills, service to the community, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, leadership/followership, and life-coping skills. AMYA is the most difficult, demanding, and rewarding program that most of the young people have ever undertaken. The staff are committed to the success of every candidate, and that success rides on the commitment of each individual to meeting the standards of the program. Historically, 75 to 85 percent of candidates commit and make it through to graduation. Those graduates return to high school, join the military, pursue trade schools, attend college, or enter the job market.

AMYA continues to excel at its mission to help reclaim the lives of Alaska’s at-risk youth and produce program graduates with the values, skills, education and self-discipline to succeed as adults. Throughout the residential cycle and for one year following graduation, the program focuses on positive, durable placement and mentorship. The program relies on dedicated volunteer mentors who support their cadets. Mentors are nominated by the cadets and also come from the community. For detailed information about AMYA and the mentorship program, please visit www.akmya.org.

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AMYA's mission is to help reclaim the lives of Alaska's at-risk youth and produce program graduates with the values, skills, education and self-discipline to succeed as adults. A 2012 RAND study estimates that \$2.66 is returned for every dollar spent on the AMYA Challenge program.

Reporters are invited to observe candidates during the two-week acclimation phase and for a brief tour of the AMYA campus, Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 9:30 a.m.

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To view photos of AMYA day one, Feb. 12, go to: www.facebook.com/GOAMYA/photos/

Details:

What: Observe AMYA acclimation phase, brief tour

Where: Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

When: Wednesday, Feb. 19.

Note: **Media interested in attending the tour will meet at the JBER-Richardson gate visitors center parking lot at 9:15 a.m.** RSVP is required. Please contact Candis Olmstead at 907-428-6030 and leave a voice message with name of news organization, reporter, and a call-back number.

Media Contact: Candis Olmstead, 907-428-6030, candis.olmstead@alaska.gov