

U.S. Army Academy Cadet Corps changes face of old military institute

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Planning for a future in the military, or just getting a taste of life in boots, life as a cadet at the U.S. Army Cadet Corps Training Center is far from a place for cracking bad eggs, Maysville Rotary Club members learned Tuesday.

Changing a perception of who attends the center is high on the center list of goals, officials said.

"Our cadets have to be crime free, drug free and doing well in school to attend," said Chief of Staff Col. Joseph M. Land Sr. "These are not the ones who 'got sent away.'"

Learning basic military style skills, the programs offered at the center are currently learned in a National Guard-style, allowing cadets to participate in exercises one weekend a month and for a six-week summer session, Land said.

Strength, teamwork and friendships, for even the shyest young person can be accomplished through the cadet program, Land said.

Creating a home for the center, which itself was nearing a centennial in existence in 2009, took some internet surfing and a chance posting on the auction website eBay, Land said.

In the past, activities had been held at different sights across the country, including military bases.

Millersburg Military Institute, a 113-year-old institution in the heart of Millersburg, in Bourbon County, ceased to operate in 2006 and the property, including a number of class and residential buildings, was placed for sale on the website.

A lieutenant spotted the advertisement in 2008, Land said.

"We found out about it there, but we did not pay the eBay price," Land said.

Appearing to have been abandoned in mid-step, food was still in a pot on the stove, and uniforms hung in an orderly manner, the facility, had also been vandalized for every piece of copper, Land said.

"We had a lot to get done," Land said.

Honoring past accomplishments of MMI, but planning for a future in Millersburg as its own entity, center volunteers quickly got the facility in functional shape; cadets have already begun participating in traditions like an annual cadet parade through town and a variety of military training exercises.

Continuing to make strides toward more amenities at the center, Land announced the planned opening of a fulltime residential preparatory school at the site.

"We are touching on the past and calling it the Forest Hill Military Academy. We are hoping to get that opened in time for fall 2011 or 2012," Land said.

In the last year, more than 500 young adults have passed through the programs, Land said.

"They try on the boots and decide if this is what they want to be. There is no obligation to join the military, but according to our statistics, 65 percent of those who stay with it, go on to some type of life in uniform, be it an EMT, law enforcement, or a branch of the military," Land said.

It also hosted a group of cadets from England, who learned living in the U.S. is more like Millersburg and less like the New York City they see on television crime shows, Land said.

On Feb. 4-6 and 11-13, the center will hold a boot camp challenge for Explorers, Venturers and Boy Scouts, to give them a taste of what a soldier's day is like. A leadership program for adults will also be held in conjunction with the challenge, officials said.

Following a brief video presentation about the American Cadet Alliance and U.S. Army Cadets, Land fielded questions in informal conversations with Rotary members.

For information go to www.goarmycadets.com

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Posted in [Local](#) on *Tuesday, January 25, 2011 10:00 pm* *Updated: 10:36 pm.* | Tags: [Millersburg Military Institute](#), [Joseph M. Land Sr.](#), [United States Army Cadet Corps](#), [Military Academies](#), [Rotary Club](#), [Ebay](#), [Forest Hill Military Academy](#), [American Cadet Alliance](#), [Www.goarmycadets.com](#), [High School Basketball](#)