



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 15, 2024

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Keystone State ChalleNGe Academy Graduates First Class of 2024

Annville, PA – Today, 42 cadets from the Keystone State ChalleNGe Academy (KSCA) graduated from the 22-week residential phase of the program on their way to a brighter future.

The KSCA is designed to give at-risk teens a second chance at obtaining their basic education. Additionally, this gives them the opportunity to learn leadership, self-discipline, and responsibility while working toward finishing their education and building a better life. The cadets participated in numerous community service events, including volunteering at food banks, assisting with the annual March for the Fallen, and maintaining the national cemetery, park, and military ceremony grounds.

The cadets will now complete a minimum of a one-year mentorship phase of the program throughout various communities while they continue their education, join the workforce, or enter the military.

"This class has many accomplishments that we can all be proud of. Most notably is their willingness to take control of their lives, putting them on a path to a positive future," said **Maj. Gen. Mark Schindler, Pennsylvania's adjutant general and head of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)**. "They have bright futures ahead of them and we look forward to their future accomplishments and contributions to our communities."

"I feel truly honored to be speaking to these cadets as they complete their Keystone State Challenge Academy resident program," said **Brig. Gen. John Pippy, commencement speaker and director, Joint Staff, Pennsylvania National Guard**. "I have toured the academy and have seen the growth and development of the cadets over the last 22 weeks. When you listen to their personal stories and understand the obstacles they have overcome, there is a genuine sense of pride and accomplishment from the cadets and the cadre because they know that these cadets have put themselves on a path that can lead to a much brighter future!"

The opening of the academy at Fort Indiantown Gap (FTIG) in Lebanon County in July 2022 formally established the National Guard Bureau's Youth ChalleNGe Program in Pennsylvania.

The program is open to 16- to 18-year-old Pennsylvania residents who are failing to progress in high school or may not be on a clear path to graduating. Applicants must be willing to be drug free, free of felony convictions, and voluntarily commit to the program. The program lasts for 17 ½ months, with the first 22-weeks consisting of residential training at FTIG followed by a minimum of a one-year of mentorship back in their home communities.

The KSCA is a joint effort between the DMVA and the National Guard Bureau in consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

The KSCA is now accepting applications for its next class, slated to begin in July.

For detailed eligibility requirements and to begin the application process, visit our [Eligibility and Admissions](#) webpage. If you prefer to have an application mailed to you or would like to talk with someone about this program, please contact the academy by emailing RA-MVPACHALLENGE@pa.gov, or by calling 717-861-7767 or 717-820-2936.

Cadets are introduced to the military structure and focus on eight core components: Academic Excellence; Physical Fitness; Leadership/Followership; Responsible Citizenship; Job Skills; Service to the Community; Health and Hygiene; and Life Coping Skills. Graduates often receive high school credits, credentials, or a GED. There is no tuition cost to attend. Meals, housing, uniforms, and school supplies are provided at no charge.

Since the program's inception in 1993, more than 200,000 young people have completed the ChalleNGe program nationwide. This award-winning program has been recognized as one of the nation's most effective and cost-efficient programs for targeting youth who have dropped out of school or are at the greatest risk for not satisfactorily progressing, are unemployed or under employed.

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program currently operates 40 Youth Challenge sites in 28 states and territories. The program is both federally and state funded.

More details about Pennsylvania's KSCA can be found at www.dmva.pa.gov/KeystoneStateChallengeAcademy.

NOTE: Photos and video from this event will be available at www.pacast.com.

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