

Let's Recognize the Opportunity

By Lt Col Valerie Brown, NC Wing Assistant Director of Education and Training

Very special people join Civil Air Patrol. Volunteers who want to contribute. These are folks who want to help, in some way. Their field of interest may be any one of the many things we do: youth development, aerospace education, operations and emergency services missions or providing the many support functions that produce results for our units and activities. Wanting to serve is the uniting factor for most of our members and we are obliged to educate them and train them so they can find their place in CAP to make their contribution.

The foundation for every CAP career begins with Level I, an orientation to who we are, understanding our legal status as a nonprofit receiving federal funds. It's learning what we stand for and what we won't stand for, the rules and many of the reasons for those rules. This is the part of CAP Education and Training that is required. Fortunately, it's available online in our CAP Volunteer University for each new member to complete as soon as they join so we can get them off to a quick start. For folks to serve safely and effectively, they need to know these basics.

The next step involves both Education and training. I'm going to focus here on the training. In our day to day dealings with the world, we expect others to know their jobs and be able to perform their duties. We want to know that others are properly trained and "certified" even if they are volunteers. This provides peace of mind for everyone involved. And so it is that we prepare and train our senior member officers and NCOs to become "certified" in a CAP Specialty. Our members can choose which specialty interests them and what will benefit their unit. A pamphlet is available for each specialty that describes the specifics: knowledge, rules and requirements. Achieving a rating involves some Key Performance items. As skills advance, the member advances from Technician to Senior level. As the scope expands, often involving activities beyond the unit level, the experienced member can earn a Master rating. In NCWG we also have support from experienced members who can serve as Subject Matter Experts for your members. These SMEs are listed on the NCWG website (Education and Training)

What an amazing opportunity CAP can be to learn about something new or expand and practice existing skills. The skills of our volunteers allow CAP to function and to serve our communities. At the same time as we serve, each member has many opportunities to learn and to grow. Isn't it a wonderful experience to watch people grow, to reach and expand beyond their own expectations? We expect to see development in our cadets, but our grown-ups develop through their experience with CAP too.

Many of the skills that can be learned and practiced with our units and on our missions are talents that can also be useful for advancement or better employment outside of CAP. We provide opportunities to plan, assist and publicize large events. We offer a chance to take on the responsibilities of leadership and management as one advances in the program. The building blocks of Education and Training are available to all.

I hope by now you can see the many benefits for our members of participating in this Education and Training program. I suspect you also realize how your unit will benefit from having capable engaged members. Please consider applying to become an Instructor for Volunteer University – to serve your members.