



## Quality Time: Teen Leadership Summit provides father, daughter with week

by Master Sgt. Chance Babin  
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9/28/2015 - **Citizen Airman/Oct. 2015** -- Deep in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, far from cellphone reception and cable television, a group of 115 teenagers from across the United States gathered at Camp Wahsega, a 4-H camp in Dahlonega, Georgia, July 12-17. Although the majority of the teens didn't know each other, they all shared a common bond -- being the child of a Air Force Reservist or Air National Guard member.

They came to Dahlonega to participate in the Teen Leadership Summit, hosted by Air Force Reserve Command, the Air National Guard and Georgia 4-H. It's a challenging week of adventure and education. However, most importantly, the summit serves as a chance for teens to meet other teens who are facing similar challenges and hardships.

For one Reserve recruiter, getting the chance to serve as an adult leader and share time with his daughter made the opportunity to attend the summit even more special.

"It was amazing," said Master Sgt. John Wood, who works in the analysis section of the AFRC Recruiting Service at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. "She is a very independent and bright young lady. Her enthusiasm was contagious as I watched her interact with the other teens. She is so much fun and always makes me proud."

Adult leaders of the summit are all Reservists and Guardsmen who volunteer to participate in the program. The teens are divided into four flights -- Eagles, Falcons, Phantoms and Raptors -- and the leaders are distributed among each flight.

"We chaperoned the teens through leadership workshops, outdoor adventures and environmental educational activities," Wood said. "We also provided mentorship and got to participate in the activities the teens were doing as well."

Wood first heard about the summit five years ago and thought once his kids were old enough it would be a unique experience.

"When the email was distributed back in March, my daughter and I discussed the opportunity, and we decided to apply for the camp," Wood said. "We both found the camp to be more than we expected. On our ride home from the Teen Leadership Summit, we reflected on the camp and agreed we both had an amazing week."

"It was so cool to be able to meet other kids who I can relate to so much," said 14-year-old Christina. "Being with other kids who are from Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard families was more than helpful. It really made me feel like finally someone understands exactly what I'm talking about."

During the week the teens participated in leadership activities, outdoor adventures, sports and open discussions on issues they face as military dependents. Activities included whitewater rafting, rock climbing,



[Master Sgt. John Wood, who works in the analysis section of the Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, and his 14-year-old daughter, Christina, had the opportunity to spend a week together with other Reserve and Guard teens at the Teen Leadership Summit in Dahlonega, Georgia. \(Master Sgt. Chance Babin\)](#)

zip lining and Ultimate Frisbee.

"I learned that it doesn't matter where you come from or how 'cool' you are," Christina said. "When you get to the camp, you're all equal. No one is better than anyone else because we all know we're there for the same reasons: to have fun and show leadership by showing how strong we are coming from military families."

The teens also received a briefing on the mission of the Reserve and Guard.

"I was impressed when the question was asked if they were interested in serving their country, and well over 85 percent of the 115 teens in attendance raised their hand," Wood said.

Each morning and evening, the teens performed a flag ceremony with everyone participating in the event. Adult leaders assisted the teens in conducting the service properly, and teens volunteered to perform the national anthem.

"The teens had a great sense of patriotism," Wood said. "Unfortunately, in today's world, we see negativity every day in the news. It was refreshing to spend a week focusing on teens in a positive environment."

Wood hopes to attend the event again next year and wouldn't mind helping out with the mission brief since he feels it would be a natural fit for a recruiter.

"Recruiters are trained for public speaking events such as this," he said. "I think we can answer many of the questions that the teens would have about the benefits of the Air Force Reserve."

Christina said she would definitely recommend the camp to others.

"There are so many amazing things you get to do there that you probably wouldn't get a chance to normally do," she said. "You create so many memories and meet some great people that no matter what will always be there for you. It's a really great way to get to know people but also a great way to learn about what your parents do for a living."

In addition to the Dahlenega camp, there is a Teen Leadership Summit each year in Estes Park, Colorado. Information for those interested in attending one of the camps, as well as for adults who want to volunteer as leaders, is available online at <http://georgia4h.org/AFRANGTeenSummit/>. Typically, applications are accepted from mid-January through mid-April.

"The Teen Leadership Summit is a rewarding volunteer opportunity," Wood said. "I would highly recommend it to others as an opportunity to share your experience and wisdom to a highly motivated group of future leaders. They provided a week of fun, adventure and memories that my daughter and I will share for a lifetime."

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