

Air Force Print News Today

Air Force news from around the world

Teen leadership summits are awesome opportunities

by Kendelle James
446th AW Family Member

3/14/2012 - **MCCHORD FIELD, Wash.** -- The Air Force Reserve/Air National Guard Teen Leadership Summit is a week-long camp for 15-18 year old dependent teens of current Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard military members

Parents, my hope is that you have already become aware of this rare opportunity, but if not, take the advice of someone who has actually attended these camps. This program changed my life forever and I want all military teens to experience it.

At the Air Force Reserve/Air National Guard Teen Leadership Summit, teens will focus on leadership development and self-confidence, learn about programs and services available to Air Force dependents, and build an appreciation for and sense of belonging to the Air Force community. They will be given a voice to inform senior leadership of their top issues as military family members

Applications are now open for Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard dependent teens interested in participating in the fully-sponsored Teen Leadership Summits.

When my parents first presented the advertisement to me, of course I was less than thrilled. My parents however, using persuasive tactics, finally won me over with the highly-effective strategy of "its-something-to-put-on-your-college-applications."

I applied, I was accepted, and before I knew it, I was boarding a plane to Colorado. Teenagers from all over the country were swarming the Denver International Airport. I hadn't been on the ground 15 minutes before I made a few friends. It turned out making friends was incredibly easy; for we had more in common than I originally anticipated. As a whole, we were all familiar with the challenges and struggles tied to being a military dependent

For the next six days we would reside at the Cheley Colorado Camps in Estes Park Valley. Not only was the campsite impressive, but I also was completely in raptures with the beautiful scenery that Colorado had to offer. Snowcapped mountains, pine trees and a clear blue sky all alluded to an incredible journey ahead of me.

There were at least two military teens per state, which meant more than 100 teens were in attendance that year. In addition to the scenery, a wide selection of activities was available for the campers to enjoy throughout the week. To my delight, I was able to trek through angelic waterfalls, rock climb, horseback ride, mountain bike, and challenge my body in ways I had never imagined!

The evenings were reserved for leadership seminars conducted by our Air Force directors. We participated in hands-on activities like team building and public speaking, while also becoming educated in proper military etiquette and professionalism. Every aspect of the camp was specifically designed to enhance our own



Kendelle James, third from left, smiles for the camera with her new-found friends at the Air Force Reserve/Air National Guard Teen Summit at Cheley Colorado Camps, Estes Park Valley, Colo. Kendelle is the daughter of Lt. Col. K.B. James, 97th Airlift Squadron here. (Courtesy photo)

potential, while also giving us those fundamental skills required to become successful leaders in our community.

The end of the week brought many tears, but also a great deal of joy. I had met some of the most wonderful people; to this day I consider them some of my best friends. Leaving them was probably the hardest part of the journey.

What had previously seemed impossible was now well within my reach. I longed to return home and use those newly-acquired skills I had developed. I wanted to serve my country and help my community.

As the Colorado Summit came to a close, it was brought to my attention (by one of my camp directors) that an organization known as the Air Force Reserve Teen Leadership Council was accepting applications. The Teen Leadership Council is a nationwide group of Air Force Reserve dependent teenagers that provide a youth perspective in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Air Force Reserve youth programs.

I wasn't ready to cut my ties with the Air Force Reserve; in fact, my camp experience made me realize the many benefits that were available to those in military service. So, I applied. It was not easy by any means, but my efforts were well worth it. Last November I was accepted into the council.

Now, I act as a representative of the Air Force Reserve youth that live in Washington State. As a council member, I have traveled across the country to attend Yellow Ribbon Events and provide service to other Air Force Reserve dependents.

Applications to this summer's Teen Leadership Summits are available at www.afrc.af.mil/library/4rfamilies. The deadline is April 13.

Editor's Note: Kendelle James is the daughter of Reservist Lt. Col. K.B. and Kimberley James, 97th Airlift Squadron here.