

# HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I TRIED TO BE AN AIR CADET FOR A WEEKEND

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I stood there, clad in a green military suit trying desperately to tie a knot.

Around me, 12- and 13-year-old air cadets effortlessly wove their string into the various knots being demonstrated for them by Captain Greg Siekierko of the 756 Wild Goose Squadron.

"Over, under, ... nope," I find myself muttering, looking over my shoulder at the young girl beside me, trying to copy what she did.

I sat in on the field training weekend for the Georgetown cadet group, which twice annually practices skills like GPS tracking, starting signal fires and radio communications while camping out for the evening.

As an arts-oriented kid, I didn't sign up for group activities and sports.

Before this weekend, my idea of air cadets was limited to pictures of children marching in blue

uniforms with funky hats.

As I learned, it's about so much more.

Cadets aged 12 to 17 came out to Everton Scout Camp in Guelph-Eramosa, where they set up five- and 10-man military-issued tents in the park.

I watch as the cadets carefully unpack the dark green cone-shaped fabric, older cadets showing younger ones how it's done.

"Do you hear me?" said one older girl to the boy standing with a pole inside the tent, trying to get it straight.

He couldn't see anything under the darkness of the green tarp and blindly tried to straighten the pole upright.

"Move the pole closer to me," she said to the boy, as the others look on with anchoring pegs in hand.

The weekend was a constant practice of teamwork, with older cadets leading younger ones in each class.

From delegating who



IFP reporter Alexandra Heck tries to complete cadets training tasks like knotting rope.

keeps track of test scores on the GPS exam, to cleanup after breakfast, lunch and dinner, the older scouts all worked together to make sure it goes smoothly.

This display of teamwork and leadership was far from what I envisioned a military-based program to be.

I expected a handful of highly militant, menacing ex-army types barking commands at scrambling children.

Instead, I saw a group of cadet leaders helping

and guiding cadets through tasks and giving input on encouraging older cadets to take the lead. These are the skills, they explained, encourage cadets to pursue a variety of different careers later in life.

From search-and-rescue and commercial pilots, who drew inspiration from their early flying experiences with the air cadets, to teachers, who found their passion for helping others while teaching a few peers how to plot GPS co-ordinates -

the program appears to be a genesis for young leaders.


So, as I was getting ready to settle into my camp quarters for the night, the captain asked if I wanted to share my thoughts on the day as the older cadets debriefed with him.

I told them I was in awe of the skills that they were picking up.

Aside from the obvious survival skills they'd obtained over the weekend, there would be a time in their lives, maybe 10 years later, when they'd realize the value of those weekends in the bush.

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**NOTICE**

## 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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**Hillview Active Living Centre**  
 (318 Guelph St., Georgetown)

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