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Acton Air Cadets on parade

By Frances Niblock

The thrill and honour of being a 197 Royal Canadian Air Cadets Typhoon squadron member was summed up nicely by first year Cadet Matthew Fritz at the squadron’s 23rd annual inspection and ceremonial review on Saturday at the Acton Legion.

Uniform crisp, boots gleaming and nerves in formation, Fritz, 12, of Erin Township told the assembled guests – proud parents, squadron officers, volunteers, local dignitaries and HQ brass – he could barely wait until his 12th birthday to join.

Fritz said he was lucky because he was invited to attend weekly cadet band and parades before his birthday.

“It wasn’t long before I made new friends and had some of the senior cadets watching over and helping me,” Fritz said, adding when he received his long-awaited uniform, he spent so much time polishing his new boots, he forgot to get a haircut.

Fritz, who flew in a glider and a Cessna, shot a .22 rifle, slept in a barracks and ate in a mess hall during his first Prop Wash at Base Borden on Victoria Day weekend, said “it was worth the wait” to join Cadets.

Retired OPP Superinten-

dent Colin Cousens, the reviewing officer, recalled discussions more than 23 years ago that led to formation of the 197 Squadron in Acton and thanked the Legion for providing a home.

“Air Cadets is one of the finest youth organizations in Canada. Unlike other sports organizations like hockey and others, the costs are very little – just your time and interest and the benefits are there for you,” Cousens said, adding all cadets should try to recruit one friend over the summer.

The crowd enjoyed the small but spirited cadet band, drill displays, flight simulator demonstration and an awards

ceremony that included presentations to drum major and Flight Sergeant Chris Legge, who received the Leadership Award, the Band Award, qualified for a flight scholarship and was promoted to Warrant Officer 2nd Class.

Warrant Officer 1st Class Aaron Smelsky earned the Air Cadet of the Year Award, the Best Dressed Cadet Award and the Legion’s Medal of Excellence. Smelsky, who earned his glider pilot licence, qualified for a power flight scholarship. He is one of four cadets retiring because of their age.

The commanding officer, Captain Richard Chapman,

praised the squadron for its hard work and parents for their support, noting the Cadets enrolled in flight school this year set record test scores. Two cadets, Smelsky and Ryan Martin, earned their wings and are licenced to fly.

Noting their numbers are down, Captain Chapman said the free cadet program is so beneficial they should have a waiting list.

“I can’t believe that there aren’t 20 or 30 more Acton youth who could benefit from Cadets,” he said.

Captain Reg Cook took over as CO of the 197 Squadron on Sunday.



SNAPPY SALUTE: Drum Major, Warrant Officer 2nd Class Chris Legge (right) takes a salute from Reviewing Officer, OPP Superintendent Colin Cousens (Ret’d) at the annual inspection of the Air Cadets 197 Typhoon squadron on Saturday at the Legion. – *Frances Niblock photo*



LEGION AWARD: Royal Canadian Legion Branch 197 president Wes Kutasienski proudly pinned the Legion Medal of Excellence on Warrant Officer 1st Class Aaron Smelsky during the 197 Typhoon Squadron’s annual inspection on Saturday at the Legion. – *Frances Niblock photo*

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