

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Astronaut Chris Hadfield presents the Academic Excellence Award named after him to Leading Air Cadet Chris Burgess during an inspection Saturday.



By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to The Champion

Chris Hadfield may have had to leave earth to earn his wings, but learned to fly right here in Milton.

The 38-year-old astronaut who flew aboard the space shuttle Atlantis to the Russian space station Mir - said he was taught to fly gliders and gained self-discipline with the 820 Milton Blue Thunder Air Cadets.

"I flew the space shuttle (Atlantis) exactly over the spot where I learned to fly gliders in town 22 years earlier," said Lieutenant-Colonel Hadfield, a five-year member of the local air cadets.

"The air cadets taught me to ignore the problems of today and to focus on solutions, in pursuit of my goals for the future. The things I learned back them gave me the ability to do the things I'm allowed to do now."

Blue Thunder's most famous graduate was on hand Saturday afternoon for their 25th anniversary celebration. He and a packed house at John Tonelli Sports Centre watched the local air cadet chapter parade and perform demonstra-

The astronaut also presented the second annual Chris Hadfield Award for academics to Leading Air Cadet (LAC) Chris Burgess, who excelled in navigation and communication training throughout the past year and demonstrated tremendous citizenship as well.

"It's a great honour to win this award. Lieutenant-Colonel Hadfield is certainly a great role model for us here," LAC Burgess explained.

Added Blue Thunder parent sponsor committee chair John Hilts, "Through Chris Hadfield we see a living example of the ultimate opportunity that's available. He's carried his dream to the limit."



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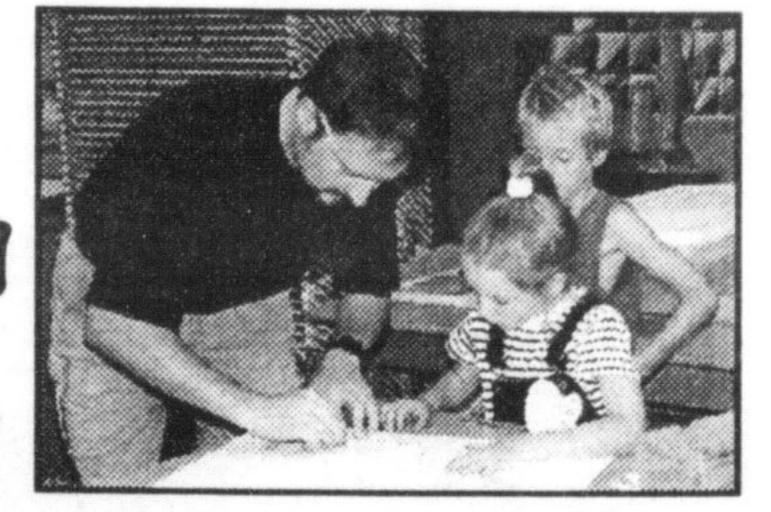
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Jeff Hanna at (905) 847-9755