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JROTC cadets 'pass gas' with the Utah Air National Guard

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ST. GEORGE - On April 5, 33 Air Force JROTC cadets from area high schools had the opportunity to participate in an in-flight refueling mission executed by the 151st Air Refueling Wing of the Utah Air National Guard.

These teenagers watched four F-16 fighter jets from Hill AFB drive up behind a large KC-135 Stratotanker to receive gas, allowing them to extend their mission. Traveling at 280 knots at 25,000 feet above the Nevada desert, each cadet got to sit prone in the belly of the aircraft, looking rearward through the "boom" operator's windows, as the highly-trained enlisted man flew the boom into the receiver's spine, using what looks like a computer game's joystick.

After refueling, the F-16 pilots, knowing the cadets were on board, flew on the wing of the tanker for 15 minutes to allow plenty of pictures to be snapped. Cadets also were given free access to the tanker's cockpit to get a clear view of what those crewmembers do to set up a stable platform from which the refueling can take place.

The overnight trip is one example of the many unique opportunities cadets enrolled in Dixie High's JROTC program can experience. This year alone, cadets have enjoyed a Civil War Reenactment, flights in helicopters and small aircraft at the St. George Airport, trips to Arizona's aircraft "Boneyard" and Colorado's Air Force Academy, parades, air shows, armed and unarmed drill competitions, and have performed well more than 6,500 hours of community service.

All that comes as part of the regular academic class that this year focused on the history of aviation, leadership and physical fitness.

Retired Senior Master Sgts. Doc Thomas and Morgan Hager, each with over 25 years of experience in the Air

If You Go

JROTC NATIONAL AWARDS CEREMONY

When: 7 p.m. May 4.

Where: Dixie High School Auditorium, 350 E. 700 South, St. George.

What: Get a glimpse of what the JROTC program is all about as top cadets are recognized with 21 national level awards.

Guest Speaker: Four-star General Robert C. Oaks, former Commander of Allied Air Forces in Europe and LDS General Authority Emeritus, will be the guest speaker.

SUMMER ORIENTATION

Any interested student entering 9th thru 12th grades next year should plan to attend the JROTC summer orientation camp set for Aug. 6 to 10 at Dixie High School.

Sign up online at www.dixiejrotc.org/summercamps.htm.

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Force, teach the classes.

Advanced cadets are offered a more rigorous ground school class, which prepares them academically to earn a private pilot license. Their instructor, Retired Air Force Colonel Glenn Whicker, a former U-2 pilot, provides instruction in a Cessna 150 for those cadets.

Promotions, awards and a firm sense of patriotism and Americanism are also an integral part of the program. Though some cadets eventually enter one of the military services, 90 percent of them do not. There is no obligation to do so, as JROTC's purpose is simply to build better citizens of this great country.

Males are, however, required to keep their hair off their ears and neck, and all cadets wear the issued - at no cost - uniform once a week as a graded item.

Students from any Washington County middle or high school are invited to enroll in JROTC next year by talking to their school counselor. An orientation camp is scheduled for Aug. 6 to 10, the week before school starts, to give new cadets a strong taste of what the program is all about.

Go to www.dixiejrotc.org for more information.

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