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Cedarville Senior Perseveres Through ROTC Cadet Training Camp

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- While most college students go home for the summer, senior John Costello spent his summer training to be an Army Officer at the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Advance Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The camp began on July 9, and concluded with graduation on August 9.

Advance Camp is mandatory training for every cadet before they graduate from school and commission as an officer. The goal of camp is to assess leadership ability. This is done through training that pushes cadets outside of their comfort zone, such as the CBRN Gas Chamber, the rappel tower, confidence course and three three-day Field Training Exercises (FTX) that have every cadet plan and execute tactical missions. Camp also teaches and assesses basic soldier tasks, such as Land Navigation with a compass and map, rifle marksmanship and Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TC3, or first aid).

"We spent 20 nights in the field sleeping on the ground in all weather conditions, including thunderstorms," Costello said. "We conducted training in 90 degree-plus temperatures, carrying around a 50-60 pound rucksack and sleeping four to five hours a night. It's mostly a mental game; the key is to connect with the others in your squad and maintain morale and motivation. If you can do that, you'll thrive, regardless of the challenges."

Costello said he also learned a lot about his approach to leadership and how he can develop as a leader. "Camp teaches us how to work and make decisions under stress, when the plan goes south and chaos is beginning to set in," he said. "It taught us how to trust ourselves and our peers, working with virtual strangers to complete the mission."

Costello was prepared for camp because of his Cedarville training, "I fell in love with Cedarville when I visited. Cedarville ROTC is a part of the Central State Marauder Battalion, so the program is only 10 minutes from campus, which is extremely convenient. Cedarville also has around 60 cadets in the program, so the same environment that makes Cedarville so great can be found in the ROTC program."

"My time at Cedarville has been phenomenal. It has given me a firm biblical foundation and worldview. The education I have received has been strenuous, but has set me apart from my peers. I feel equipped for the future spiritually and educationally. I'm looking forward to learning even more as a resident assistant and as a senior. This is my home, and I love every part of it."

After graduation, Costello plans to commission as an active duty army officer, most likely in the logistical branch of the Army. "There's a lot of uncertainty, but a lot of trusting God as well," Costello said.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study.

Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Subhead: Senior John Costello is at the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Cadet Training Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky, from July 9 until August 9.

Photo Caption: from left: Cassandra Jensen, John Costello, Matt Ysais