

MOUNTAINEER CHALLENGE ALUMNI

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Mountaineer Challenge Academy Welcomes 64th Class



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CADET TO CADRE



Saige Sestak graduated from the Mountaineer Challenge Academy's first class of 2019 with 154 other cadets.

As a cadet, Sestak says she was pretty quiet. "I wasn't always squared away. I flew under the radar. I did what I was told to do and I did it when told to do so." She served as Platoon Leader and Assistant Platoon Leader for 5th Platoon.

After graduation, she worked at Wingstop as a cashier and was promoted to Manager after 2 months. But she never stopped thinking about MCA. I came back in March 2024 for many reasons, but the biggest reason was to give back. "My biggest support system was [the] cadre. They were always there to pick me up. I aspire to be like them. I know I can't save everyone, but I will always try."

"MCA impacted my life in so many ways. Before Challenge, I had no confidence, no dreams, no self-discipline. MCA taught me that nothing comes easy, but if you give your 100% in everything you do, the HARD work pays off. I am forever grateful for MCA, because without it, I wouldn't be who I am today. I took what I learned here in every aspect of my life. When things get hard, I always fall back to "Winners never quit and quitters never win."

(Editor's Note: At the time of this publication, Ms. Sestak served on her first teaching team for Acclimation and her platoon won Platoon Olympics.)



At Mountaineer Challenge Academy South, our staff isn't just a team — we're a family. We embody the "One Guard Family" concept, where a shared mission and a deep sense of unity empower us to overcome any obstacle together. What's even more meaningful is that for many of us, that sense of family isn't just metaphorical — it's literal.

Take the **Dynamic Duo**, for example: Keith Payne, a Squad Leader on the night shift, and his son Keyshawn Payne, a Senior Squad Leader during the day. This father-son team wears the blue with pride and leads our cadets with dedication and heart.

Then there's the **Three Amigos**, a tight-knit trio from the DFAC. Tina Nichols and her mother, Evelyn Auxier, are our talented Lead Cooks, and joining them is Tina's cousin, Mary Nichols, who serves as a Cook. The holiday season for them isn't just about work — it's about family, as they celebrate together both at home and on the job

The **Quad Squad** is another shining example. Tanner Curry is a Senior Squad Leader, and alongside him, his father, Kevin Curry, and his uncle, Aaron Curry, serve as Squad Leaders. Rounding out the family is Tanner's sister, Gracie Adkins, who works in the DFAC as a cook, keeping the spirit of family alive in every meal.

Finally, the **Fabulous Four** proves that family extends to all corners of the Academy. Dwayne Rollins, one of our skilled Trade Specialists, works side by side with his wife Natasha Rollins, a Squad Leader. His sister, Tina Richmond, brings her culinary expertise as a Cook, and his nephew (and Tina's son), Gary Young, serves as a Logistics Storekeeper, ensuring everything runs smoothly.

At Mountaineer Challenge Academy South, we believe family is everything. While not all of us are related by blood, we share a bond built on mutual respect, care, and a commitment to each other. This strong sense of family drives us to support one another in all we do.



THE ROAD to success



Max Hess (Class 1-2015)

Max enlisted in the Air Force right after the MCA where he spent the next 11½ years on active duty. He deployed multiple times and enjoyed his time served. He separated in 2023 to pursue his childhood dream of being a police officer. Now he's a full time officer in Georgia and a dad to an amazing daughter. "The MCA has helped me with giving guidance with the at-risk youth I encounter at work. I often recommend the Georgia Youth Challenge program to parents and teenagers that I feel would benefit from it."

Adam Selbe (Class 2-2011)

Adam conquered many jobs and learned all kinds of different trades. He is currently working at FedEx as a delivery driver and has been with the company almost 3 years. He has 2 sons and is about to marry the love of his life. "I owe my life to Mountaineer Challenge Academy for making me the man I am today. They taught me so much [from] work ethics to discipline and to be a good person. I went in when i was 17 turning 18 and since I've been out it seems like forever. I'm 31 now just wish i could go back and do it all over again."



Beondra Tanner (Class 2 -2020 South)

Beondra is currently working as an ER/Trauma nurse in Vermont. "I was struggling with a lot of family issues at the time and always getting in trouble. MCA helped me with both family and myself. I got out of a bad situation and got the help and support I needed with MCA. I have grown and became a better person because of MCA. MCA gave me strength, structure, discipline, and so much more. I would gladly go back again."

Want to be featured in our next Alumni newsletter? Contact Roxanne Bright (roxanne.l.bright@wv.gov) and let her know what you've been up to since you left MCA. We love to hear how well our graduates are doing!



Our cadets say that the food at MCA is one of their **favorite** things here. Here is one of their favorite recipes, straight from the DFAC!

Western Burger

- 1 Hamburger Bun
- 2 Slices American Cheese
- 2 Quarter Pound Hamburger Patties
- ¼ cup French Fried Onions
- 2 tsps. Aioli Sauce
- Butter, melted

Cook hamburger patties to desired doneness.

Brush butter on hamburger bun and grill in skillet, lightly.

Assemble burger from the bottom to the top in the following order:

- Bottom Bun
- Hamburger Patty
- Cheese Slice
- Hamburger Patty
- Cheese Slice
- French Fried Onions
- Aioli Sauce
- Top Bun

HELP WANTED

Have you ever considered a career with the Mountaineer Challenge Academy?

MCA North
MCA South and
Mountaineer Job Challenge
are all hiring.

Positions include -

Squad Leaders

Dietary Assistants

Residential Advisors

You can check out the Employment Page on the MCA web page and fill out the WV Military Authority application.

If you have any questions, please contact HR Belinda Sharp at 304.282.3426