

We Have Come A Long Way Baby....

Thirteen cadets, who started their careers here at Camden Military Academy either in the 8th or 9th grades, are preparing to graduate and to continue their lives' journeys to the next level. Each of them is a unique young man from different places and with different plans. However, they all agree on basic elements of their experience at CMA. Each of them agrees that their four or five year experience is fundamentally different from those students attending the Academy for a semester, a year or even a couple of years. They all share dramatically improved relationships with their respective families. Additionally, each of these cadets has formed friendships which transcend mere classroom acquaintances. They all also express a deep belief that CMA has prepared them for their futures and has imbued them with a profound sense of self-confidence.

These cadets all described unequivocal improvements in their relationships with their parents. They said they are now more trusted than they ever have been. Furthermore, communication between them and their families has been strengthened.

Cadet 1LT Ray Gradwell, of Cape May, New Jersey, has been attending CMA since the 8th grade. He said of his relationship with his family, "It's a lot better. Obviously my good grades make my parents happy, but they trust me more to make the right decisions, and my dad and I have more conversations because I'm more honest with him now."

"CMA taught me to respect my elders and to try to help them out when they need help. It taught me

to listen to them, because I now understand they know more than me," said Cadet 2LT Malik McGill. McGill is from Kingstree, South Carolina and has attended The Academy since his 8th grade year.

As well as enhanced relationships with their families, these four and five-year cadets also point out that, because of the extended time and the fact they have been boarded together for years, they have formed extremely close bonds. These cadets have marched together, roomed together, learned together and played together more than kids at regular schools ever could. "Being here for four years with the same roommate (McGill) has led to much stronger bonding in terms of our friendship," said Cadet CPT Matthew Zimmerman, a cadet at CMA since the 9th grade. His family background is of military service, and he has lived in many places. In addition to improving character and fostering life-long bonds of friendship, CMA also readies "long run" cadets for the future through leadership training and building self-confidence. "I've learned to dress myself like a professional. I've learned to be there on time, and I've learned to be respectful and respectable," said Cadet 1LT Breon Spencer. Spencer has been at CMA since his freshman year and hails from Dayton, Ohio. Cadet 1SG Christopher Whittar, of Augusta, Georgia, has also been at the school since his freshman year. He said of his CMA experience, "When I first came here, I wasn't at all sure if I was going to college. Now it's not a matter of if I'm going to college, but which one."



"My name is Ray Gradwell and I was fortunate to come to Camden Military Academy in the 8th Grade. When I first came CMA, I had a really bad attitude toward my school work. As soon as I was introduced to the strict way that study hall was done, I learned to manage my time and actually get my homework done. In addition to CMA expanding my opportunities in the areas of academics and athletics, because of the coaches here at Camden, I have received a Lacrosse Athletic Scholarship to Belmont Abbey College which is located in Charlotte, North Carolina. While there, I will be majoring in business and continue to expand my horizons." Ray Gradwell of Cape May, New Jersey.

"I arrived at Camden Military Academy on August 20, 2011 in the 9th grade. I was really happy to be at CMA and a part of Delta Company where CSM Wilder was my strict Tac Officer. During the summer of my 8th grade year I was assigned to CSM Wilder and I really felt like he liked me. Even though I had to get up at 6:00 A.M. every morning to dress-up in a uniform, clean my room, sweep the hallway, clean the bathroom, and endure the rain, cold or heat to go eat breakfast, these tasks taught me discipline and responsibility. Sometimes the days at CMA were very tough, however, I slowly made my goal, which was to graduate from CMA as a senior officer. I can truly say that because of CMA, I have become more of a respectable person and without this school, I would not be able to go to college." Breon Spencer of Overland Park, Kansas.

"My name is Davis Lord and I've been a cadet at Camden Military Academy since 9th grade. I entered this school with a negative attitude and a chance to change my life was a procrastinator with academic assignments and this school quickly changed that with a structured study hall to help me get my work done. This school has also shaped me into a leader instead of follower. I'm a 1st Lieutenant on the Battalion staff, and everything I do and say influences the 275 cadets in the Corps of Cadets. Of the many opportunities to excel, there are three that stand out among the rest. Parades have taught me that personal appearance is very important when performing in front of alumni past graduates, or even people just visiting the campus. In addition, athletics has not only improved my baseball skills but also my leadership on and off the field. As a member of the color guard, I was able to meet South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham at the state Democratic Party Convention. This was a highlight of my experience at Camden Military Academy. These activities have shaped me into a better person and leader. I'll use these life lessons when I go into the Army after college. My experience at Camden Military Academy will help guide me in the right direction now and into the future." Davis Lord of Charlotte, North Carolina.



"My first impression of Camden Military Academy was that the school seemed "OK". My parents emphasized to me however that one can not do things just for the immediate time, because the future is far important than the "now." When I arrived at Camden in 2011, I was introduced to my Tactical Officer, CSM Wilder, who demanded compliance with a no nonsense style and excuses were not acceptable. I learned a lot at CMA which included the following rules: maintaining perfect order in one's room, self-discipline, accountability and the idea that knowledge is power. Cadets also learn that whatever happens to them good or bad, it is the result of their own action. Currently, I've applied to ten tier-one colleges and received 9 acceptances and I am on 1 wait-list. (I'm working on the wait list). It may sound arrogant, but if I would have continued in a public school system, I doubt any of this would have happened for me.

To my teachers, CSM Wilder, CMA administration and fellow cadets, thank you for all your help and support. Now, all of us in the 2015 graduating class will be moving in different directions and no matter what they may be, performance and success are completely up to us." Michael Donovan of Clearwater, Florida.



Davis Lord, Cody Auburger, Jake McGuire, Robert Pearce, Chris Witthar, Ray Gradwell, Ryam Figlow, Michael Donovan, Chris Chamberlain, Matthew Zimmerman, Malike McGill, Breon Spencer