

NEIGHBORS

HOBART

Cadets qualify to attend symposium

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Hobart High School's JROTC program, only in its third year, is really still in its infancy compared to those at other schools.

However, four of its cadets qualified recently to attend the George C. Marshall Junior ROTC Leadership Symposium in Virginia.

Nearly 286,000 cadets from 1,545 schools throughout the United States and overseas were tested to participate in the event, which focused on Marshall and his leadership principles.

The HHS cadets, who scored highest in the Midwest, were among only 144 chosen to attend.

"They'd had only about six months of instruction, only a year of ROTC before taking the test," said Lt. Col. Scott Buhmann, who runs the HHS program. "We thought we'd be blown away because we hadn't had time to prepare. We didn't think we'd be that competitive because we had to cram three years of learning into a few months."

Principal Dave Spitzer agreed.

"At first we were in shock," he said. "Not that we didn't feel they were capable, but to do it so quickly is almost unheard of. It really reflects the commitment of the instructors and the kids."

Team members were selected based on how well they answered questions about leadership and leadership scenarios. At the symposium, which was held at Virginia Military Academy and Washington and Lee University, teammates Anthony Gilyan, Mitch Weidinger, Erick Pistello and Darrell Clark learned about the life and accomplishments of Marshall, heard prominent speakers and participated in interactive presentations that put them in leadership roles.

"It was really cool how they could get everybody so fired up," said Weidinger, who serves as battalion commander.

Although JROTC is a leadership program and not a military recruitment tool, Weidinger has



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Cadet Lt. Col. Mitch Weidinger and Cadet Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Gilyan, with Lt. Col. Scott Buhmann, a senior Army instructor, Cadet 1st Lt. Darrell Clark and Cadet Capt. Erick Pistello, are pictured at the award banquet ending the George C. Marshall Leadership Symposium.

already enlisted in the National Guard and has completed basic training. This symposium, he said, helped him hone his skills as a motivator.

"I've always been confident in myself as a leader and in motivating others. I have trouble motivating myself," he said. "I saw I wasn't the only one having a hard time. It'll help me to keep leading people that want to be lead."

Pistello, Gilyan and Clark echoed Weidinger's sentiments.

"Before, I didn't care much to lead, but I gained a lot more confidence," Clark said. "And we learned a lot about George C. Marshall."

"I definitely learned how to motivate and learned leadership skills," said Gilyan, command sergeant major of the squad. "I'll be able to motivate the cadets better."

Pistello also appreciated the diverse mix of cadets at the symposium.

"There were all different styles of leadership, all higher ranking cadets. You could see what works best for you," he said.

"Each of these guys saw something they've never seen before," Buhmann said of the experience for his cadets. "It was such an honor for these kids to go."