

Carroll squadron gets a lift with ballooning class

Members of the Carroll Composite Squadron recently participated in a ground crew training for hot air ballooning in Westminster, Md. (Photo credit: Maj. Brenda A. Reed, CAP)



GROUND CREW TRAINING COURSE PROVIDES UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS

By **Maj. Brenda A. Reed, CAP** Commander, Carroll Composite Squadron

11/11/2010—**WESTMINSTER, MD**—Civil Air Patrol Maryland Wing members from the Carroll Composite Squadron recently learned how to be ground crew members for a hot air balloon pilot during a squadron activity held in Westminster, Md.

Cadet and senior members, along with family and friends, gathered in the early morning hours when the winds were calm. They met on a farm field that belonged to one of the squadron families. There they met Bubba Winston, a balloon pilot from Virginia, who has flown hot air balloons since 1985.

The day began with a safety briefing for all members along with a talk about the dangers of drug use. Once the balloon was inflated, the anti-drug message was clear for all to see. Winston, a former NCAA football referee, worked with former First Lady Nancy Reagan on her 'Just Say No' campaign and currently works with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and National Football Foundation to bring the message of avoiding drugs to youth around the region.

Cadet Sr. Airman Griffin DeLisle and his dad, Sr. Member Rene' DeLisle, have worked with Winston and his balloon on many occasions and were instrumental in bringing the balloon course to the squadron, which included a classroom portion prior to the actual launching.

Following the briefing, participants started the process of unloading the balloon and preparing it for inflation and launching. First the basket had to be put together and hooked to the propane tanks that would provide the hot air later. Then the balloon itself was taken from its case and spread out across the field. As Cadet DeLisle and Cadet Airman 1st Class Ryan Zamecki held the opening of the balloon for air to enter and Cadet Master Sgt. Ali Globus worked the large fan providing the air, all other crew members pulled and tugged on the sides of the balloon to get it inflated.

One of the more breathtaking moments was once the balloon was inflated members were allowed to go inside the balloon, which created a cathedral like atmosphere as if surrounded by stained glass. After taking some photos, everyone left the balloon so Winston could use the propane torch to supply hot air into the balloon which would bring the balloon upright. Because of the chilly early morning temperatures, it didn't take very much propane to create a warmer temperature inside the balloon than outside.

The balloon was ready to launch. Although the balloon wasn't launched for a long distance flight, cadets worked the ground and carried the balloon back and forth as several members and their parents took short flights across the field. Finally, the owner of the farm got in for a flight that was meant to go over the farm where he could get some aerial photos. The winds abruptly changed and the balloon went a different direction. Cadets jumped into the CAP van and proceeded to chase the balloon, which safely landed in another farm field. At that point the balloon was disassembled and returned to its case.

"Best day ever" and "most awesome CAP activity I've ever been to" were some of the comments made during the event. Overall, CAP members, families, and friends all learned something about aerospace on that morning in the Westminster field.

To watch a video of Bubba Winston during a recent airshow, visit this [link](#).

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with more than 60,000 members nationwide. CAP, in its Air Force auxiliary role, performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and has been credited by the AFRCC with saving more than 100 lives this fiscal year. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the more than 25,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for 68 years.

There are more than 1,500 members of CAP in Maryland. Last fiscal year wing members flew 42 search and rescue missions and were credited with 31 finds. For more information about the CAP, visit www.mdcap.org. The Carroll Composite Squadron meets weekly on Tuesday nights at the National Guard Armory, 300 Hahn Road, in Westminster, Md. Prospective members and their families are always welcome. For more information, visit the squadron website at www.carrollcap.org.