



NEWS

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Ore. cadets represent CAP in StellarXplorers national finals

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – A Civil Air Patrol cadet team from the Oregon Wing’s Aurora Composite Squadron is competing this week in the national finals of the Air Force Association’s StellarXplorers National High School Space Competition. StellarXplorers uses the space systems program CAP has integrated in its aerospace education programs for many years, Analytical Graphics Inc.’s Systems Took Kit (STK).

After three qualifying rounds, Aurora's Africanized Killer Bees (AKB) scored enough points to place fourth overall in the nation.

“The AKBs are the only CAP team in the finals this year,” said Maj. Carl Knox, the squadron’s StellarXplorers director. Two other CAP teams from the Westchester Cadet Squadron in the Bronx, New York, and the Titan Cadet Squadron in Indianapolis, Indiana, made it to the StellarXplorers semifinals.

Team AKB is made up of Cadet Capt. Simon Chuang and Senior Airman Jarek Jellison, who attend public school, and Cadet Senior Airmen Douglas Clayton and Rhett Miller, who are homeschooled. Adult supervisors are Capt. Marc Mintao, Maj. Rick Koon, 2nd Lt. Peter Mann and Knox.

Chuang recently accepted appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

“Going into the season I had little experience with space technology. I was nervous at first, but the program explained the material well and I gained interest,” said Chuang.

“Along with learning the information, my favorite aspect of StellarXplorers is the problem solving involved in the competitions,” he added. “In the scenarios our team gets to face and solve the same problems that NASA and other space administrators and companies deal with. When we find a solution, it is incredibly satisfying and also has real-world applications.”

The all-expenses-paid StellarXplorers finals, held in Colorado Springs, Colorado, will take place from April 5-9. The top 10 teams will also tour the Air Force Academy and the United Launch Alliance, and attend the 33rd Annual Space Symposium.

The competition will occur on Friday, with the teams sequestered for eight hours. In that time, the cadets will be presented with a problem that can be solved by either placing a satellite into a specific orbit, designing a satellite with a specific capability or launching a satellite on a specific launch vehicle. They must select the best launch vehicle, decide which satellites will accomplish the mission, protect the satellites, stay within the weight constraints and stay under budget.

They must also calculate the correct launch window and take into account delays due to bad weather. Delays tend to drain the budget.

There is an academic quiz, which must be completed in one hour.

Finally, they must present their solution to the judges using a team-created PowerPoint presentation.

Civil Air Patrol, the longtime all-volunteer U.S. Air Force auxiliary, is the newest member of the Air Force's Total Force, which consists of regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, along with Air Force retired military and civilian employees. CAP, in its Total Force role, operates a fleet of 550 aircraft and performs about 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 78 lives annually. Civil Air Patrol's 56,000 members nationwide also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Its members additionally play a leading role in aerospace/STEM education and serve as mentors to 24,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet program. Performing missions for America for the past 75 years, CAP received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2014 in honor of the heroic efforts of its World War II veterans. CAP also participates in Wreaths Across America, an initiative to remember, honor and teach about the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans. Visit www.capvolunteernow.com for more information.

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