

News release



Everett Public Schools

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Everett High School NJROTC wins Navy award

School unit is deemed “most improved” and will receive award on May 13

“At the beginning of the 2007-08 school year, the Everett [NJROTC](#) unit was a nearly defunct, demoralized organization that was failing in almost every measure.”

Those were the opening words written by Everett High School’s NJROTC instructor Commander Richard Gile in his bid to have his school unit considered as the most improved NJROTC unit of Area 13. The dramatic change detailed in his nomination secured the award for Everett High School NJROTC cadets. They will be honored on Friday, May 13 at the annual awards program at Everett Civic Auditorium.

Gile chronicled the unit’s flagging nature three years ago when, in 2007-08, there were just 41 cadets onboard. The unit did not have a good reputation, and relationships with cadets and administrators were strained. Although the district had considered disbanding the unit, there was strong support for the benefits a well-run program would have under new instructors.

As Gile explained, “with new leadership in place, three goal sets were chiseled into the fabric of the unit:

“Goal 1: Rebuild a broken NJROTC unit. Establish strong working relationships with the school, district, community, and local naval leadership. Reinvigorate the cadet staff. Bring a sense of pride and integrity back into the lives of the cadets.

Goal 2: Re-establish all NJROTC teams including: armed and unarmed drill, PT, Color Guard, orienteering, academic and air rifle.

Goal 3: Wage a positive NJROTC PR campaign within the school and community. Make community service a hallmark of the Everett NJROTC program. The dream of the SNSI was that one day, the mayor of our great city would look upon the Everett NJROTC unit with pride, and think of it as the ‘mayor’s own.’”

New leadership, new goals, and a renewed focus made a difference. This year the number of cadets rose to a high of 119. Each year, NJROTC units submit end-of-year reports and earn points for their achievements. The first year garnered just 50 points; this year, they are scoring more than 150 points.

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The community benefits from a well-run cadet program. Gile noted, "The Everett NJROTC unit has gone from essentially zero community service hours to over 3,000 this year. Of particular note, the unit has adopted and been adopted by several city departments including the Everett Senior Center, the Everett Parks Department and the Everett Animal Shelter. Today, the mayor of Everett knows who we are and looks upon us with pride. We will be the 'mayor's own.'"

Everett High School Principal Catherine Matthews shares Gile's pride in the cadets, "Everett NJROTC has gone from a program the community was almost completely unaware of to one which it relies on for its most important events from Color Guards to volunteers who contribute countless hours of service and do it with a smile on their faces. From a program focused on itself and self-preservation, to a program that is integral to the school, NJROTC is the "go to" program when anything important is going on. Instead of just wearing uniforms, cadets now are proud of their uniforms, what they represent and the recognition and respect they have earned as leaders and contributing members of their school and communities."

Everett NJROTC Cadet and Commanding Officer Joshua Ogden remembers, "... that first day I walked into the NJROTC classroom four years ago. Seeing pictures of ships and aircraft on the walls, signal flags hanging from the ceiling, and a display case full of awards, let me know that I had gotten myself into something important. I had high expectations for my experience in NJROTC.

"My starry-eyed view of the NJROTC unit turned to disappointment. As told by the upper classmen, the NJROTC unit at Everett was at the lowest point it had ever been.

"When my Senior Naval Science Instructor walked in for the first time, it was his first year as well. With new faces everywhere, the unit had a chance to become something great. Amazing things started happening.

"The NJROTC unit started to engage with the school and with the community.

"Where the relationship with the administration had been previously strained, now the program is highly respected and is a source of pride. The principal has called NJROTC students "the best students at Everett High. This is a serious testimony to how our reputation has improved.

"Everett High School NJROTC has been a defining high school experience, one that I will never forget. The success and honors that our unit has achieved during the past few years proves that the unit has risen from the brink of collapse to becoming one of the top NJROTC unit's in Area 13.

"Now when I walk into the NJROTC rooms, I feel the sense of pride and honor that I had hoped for that first day I walked in."

Giving credit entirely to his cadets, Gile says, "Everett NJROTC has indeed come a long way. The numbers in the end-of-year reports record the progress and accomplishments. We're not done yet – we're just getting warmed up."

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