

## Getting Around, Getting A's

Hello blog readers! It's been quite some time since I've submitted anything to cadet blogs—this semester has been super busy and tiring, but I'm *loving* it (and, oddly enough, getting more sleep than I used to... because I'm *so* tired, I can't fight it). The other day I was thinking back to when I was an "avid blogger" and how I looked down on the upper-class bloggers because they

didn't post as often as I did. Now I have a little more empathy for them. Aside from the additional duties and larger workload, it's harder—at least for me—to come up with things to talk about. To me, things here have become normal in my book. In my Academy-centric tunnel vision, it doesn't seem like anything I'm doing here is anything new or novel for outside readers. I realized that probably isn't the case. I sat down, opened a blank document and began typing. The rust shook off quickly, and soon I had too many ideas for one blog. So, here's the first one.

In honor of my fourth-class self (who was a better blogger than those upperclass...), I'm doing a blog in the style of a few that I did in the spring of 2012: a blog that gave short snippets of everything cool that I had done in the last month. My blog today will not be as long as those since I'm only talking about two events. I am stepping it up a bit by adding pictures. I didn't do that as a 4/c. Well, let's get to it!

### Dog Days – Community Service Event

At the end of October approximately 50 cadets went to a community service event called Dog Days – it's a special program that travels around the state having special dog adoption days. We, the cadets, were "crowd control." We mostly walked dogs (an excuse to play with them, something we never get to do in animal-void Chase Hall), cleaned out cages, and kept the waiting families occupied. I specifically got to take pictures all day; being an "event

photographer" is something that I've always wanted to do, and to get community service hours doing that, I couldn't ask for anything more! Aside from our getting our "pet fix" (as I refer to it), the day was rewarding because we got to see so many families—especially those with young children—walk away with a new family member. Whenever a dog was adopted, our table rang a loud bell so that everyone in the building could hear and know that a dog had been adopted and was departing with its new family. Kinda like in the Coast Guard when a commanding officer departs his/her ship...right.

The last station where we took family portrait pictures was also a small "general store" with items that a new pet owner might need (you'd be surprised how many people came without a leash!). We had a few preteens working with us, and they were enticed with the Coast Guard Academy and with us, these college kids who called themselves cadets. I had several people say to us, as they were leaving, that they enjoyed interacting with us throughout the adoption process that day; they even commented at how well we all interacted with the children who were present. I know that cadets are rowdy and sometimes



My friend, James, with a dog awaiting its new family to pick him up and replace his orange bandana with a tie-dye one.

Yes, even I wore an orange bandana in hopes of getting adopted.

*Picture by 2/c Bobczynski*



obnoxious when we get cooped up here at the Academy, but put us out in public at an event, and we generally shine. I wish there were more opportunities (or maybe the issue is needing more *time*) to do events like this.

### Denver Physics Conference

Over Veterans' Day weekend, I traveled to Denver, Colorado for a physics conference. The three other students who work in the Academy's plasma lab (plasma = fourth state of matter, "hyper-excited" gases) were presenting posters at a professional society conference. We got the weekend off, so we all explored Colorado. I'd never been to the Rockies before, so that was a really awesome experience!

I've been to several conferences with CGAPL (the lab, Coast Guard Academy Plasma Lab), and this one was by far the best one I've attended! While travelling to the conference, we stopped at Columbia University's Plasma Lab, a collaborator lab



My poster at the conference.



At Rocky Mountain State Park, where it's winter year round...or so it seems.

with ours. There, in addition to a tour of their lab, we met grad students who would be presenting posters at the conference we were going to also. The first day of the conference, Monday, we attended sessions and talks, but most exciting was getting to talk to the graduate students from Columbia. Because we knew them personally, it was easy to have more in-depth conversations about their work and their poster. I was surprised at how much I could actually understand!

The next day, Tuesday, we presented our posters at the Student Session. In the past, travel schedules and schedule changes have not allowed us to present at and/or attend student session. Being able to talk to other students my age (and only slightly above my level of physics understanding) was reassuring—we, the cadets, weren't alone or far off

track compared to these other students...and most of them are physics majors in their undergraduate studies. While presenting my poster (standing by it, answering questions from passersby, etc.), several instructors, graduate students, and researchers from national labs visited my poster, gave me tips and pointers on my project, and even encouraged me to get in touch with them when I have future questions. Being able to network in that way was pretty incredible. Until this point, it seemed that our external resources and points of contact for the Academy plasma lab were few and limited. This showed me that we could have so many more! I can't wait to start working with these other labs.

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So there you have it, two really fun events that I participated in over the last month. And here I was, thinking that I had nothing interesting to write about! Even with all this fun, I am still able to keep my grades up and on top of my military obligations. So don't let anyone tell you that at the Academy you have to forfeit grades for fun or vice versa. They *can* coexist.

Hoping to get a few more blogs—written and video—out here shortly. With leave (break) coming up soon, I should have plenty of time! Until then, cheers!