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Board of Governors Hears from Arizona Cadets Who Flourished Despite Pandemic



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recently heard four Arizona Wing cadets give credit to CAP for providing structure and purpose that helped them land on their feet during uncertain times.

The four shared their experiences with the board before the Arizona Wing Conference in Phoenix. The board members heard from

- Cadet Capt. Cynthia Liu, Willie Composite Squadron
- Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Mary Kostas, 388th Composite Squadron
- Cadet Tech. Sgt. Annabel Peltzer, Sky Harbor Composite Squadron
- Cadet Tech. Sgt. Zane Saliba, Deer Valley Composite Squadron

“It was fantastic,” George said.

George was impressed with the cadets’ drive and focus. The future of CAP and the nation is in good hands, he said, with cadets like Liu, Kostas, Peltzer, and Saliba.



“They are, in a word, impressive,” he said.

The person in charge of recruiting the presenters was Maj. Margot Myers, public affairs officer for the Arizona Wing. She and Lt. Col. Linda Yaeger, wing chief of staff, interviewed the cadets and Myers spoke with them about telling their stories to the panel.

“I was very pleased with how well they did,” she said.

Cadet Capt. Cynthia Liu

Liu has interests as varied as chess, art, debate, and piano. She joined CAP on her 12th birthday in January 2020, not long before the shutdown. CAP membership attracted her with additional opportunities, including the chance to learn to fly.



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opportunities to grow.”

She’s already
taken advantage
of one
opportunity by



entering an art competition based on
aviation and aerospace. She won first
place at the national level.

Her squadron met weekly via Zoom during the shutdown. Even
online, senior members continued to lead as role models and
inspired other members, Liu said.

“At the same time, the cadet promotion program kept setting
goals to challenge me and keep me focused during this time of
difficulty,” she said.

Liu has set the bar high for herself. She aspires to being a
leader, earning a private pilot certificate, and attending medical
school.

Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Mary Kostas

Kostas started attending CAP meetings
on Zoom in July 2020 and then joined the
388th Composite Squadron on Aug. 4.
Almost before she knew it, she had
earned a disaster relief ribbon for
participating in Operation Pulse Lift blood
drives hosted by her squadron with the
American Red Cross.



“It was the most rewarding experience
being involved with CAP and the
American Red Cross,” she said.

Kostas is in 10th grade at Scottsdale
Preparatory Academy, where she
earned straight A’s in all honors classes

this year. She also was chosen to be part of [this video](#) about
aerospace education on GoCivilAirPatrol.com.

Kostas was attracted to Civil Air Patrol when a friend in another
squadron told her he was given the opportunity to learn to fly –



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Her future plans include getting a STEM-related (science, technology, engineering, and math) college degree, obtaining a private pilot certificate, and remaining a member of CAP.

“CAP was and is a blessing in my life,” she said.



Cadet Tech. Sgt. Annabel Peltzer

Peltzer never misses an opportunity to learn. That was evident when she completed 50 advanced STEM credits from Mesa Community College while being home-schooled in Phoenix.

Undaunted by the COVID-19 shutdown, Peltzer attended her first online CAP meeting in August 2020 and joined in

October. As an introvert, she said, the virtual meetings were perfect for her, and they fit her busy schedule. The squadron’s cadets The cadets developed creative agendas for the meetings, filled with impressive speakers and opportunities, which meant she got to witness professional virtual presentations.

“They became an excellent example of how I wanted to host my own meetings” as president of the community college’s math club, Peltzer said.



Long interested in aviation, she was introduced to CAP when she visited her sister at Hillsdale College in Michigan, which she will attend this fall. A friend of her sister was a longtime CAP cadet and invited Peltzer to visit her squadron.

That’s all it took.

“Shortly after I got back to Arizona, I contacted my local squadron to learn more,” Peltzer said.

She has amassed an impressive list of credentials, such as being a member of an international honor society and completing NASA’s Mission Concept Academy. She has also



al piano

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At the collegiate level, Peltzer plans to concentrate on math, physics, and engineering and will be involved with the Michigan Wing’s Hillsdale Composite Squadron.

One of Peltzer’s favorite CAP programs during the shutdown was the beginner STEM badge, for which she completed the Women in Aviation and Astronautics courses. That gave her a deeper appreciation for early aviators who laid the groundwork and inspired her to greatness.

“I hope to further their legacy in my own way,” she said.

Cadet Tech. Sgt. Zane Saliba

In retrospect, joining Civil Air Patrol during the COVID-19 shutdown proved to be a good experience for Saliba. At the time, though, it didn’t seem that way, since guidelines ruled out in-person contact with other Deer Valley members.



Looking back, though, he sees the positive.

“In a way, I’m glad that I joined the program at this time,” Saliba said, “because I got a true test of endurance in this program



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 Saliba's older brother, Anthony, the Squadron's cadet commander. He's the cadet logistics officer, providing uniforms, organizing inventory, and helping other cadets.

"This is an amazing job and one that I would like to excel at for the rest of my term," Saliba said.

CAP also is serving as a springboard to Saliba's future goals of attending the Air Force Academy and becoming a pilot.

And he will carry CAP's life lessons with him.

"My favorite part of Civil Air Patrol is that it provides both education and morals to all of its members," he said.

While not chosen to speak to the board specifically because they joined during the COVID-19 shutdown, all four cadets made it clear that they didn't feel the timing constituted a detriment. Each expressed that in some way that they felt they were able to build a solid foundation in CAP before tackling such in-person challenges as military customs and courtesies, drill, and physical training.

Loretta Fulton

Contributing Writer

MISSION STATEMENT

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