

TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY

**An Introduction to the Texas National Guard Youth Challenge Program—
Reclaiming the potential of at-risk teens through mentoring, education, training and volunteer service.**



The Youth Challenge Program provides second chances to young people in Texas each semester. Texas Challenge Academy is designed to reclaim the potential of at-risk students by training them to become successful, responsible, productive citizens through a program of mentoring, education, physical fitness, and volunteer service to the community. The program is open to young men and women ranging from 16 to 18 years old who have either dropped out

Contact Information

To set up a presentation or for more information about the Texas Challenge Academy, contact:

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WEBSITE:
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of high school or who are in danger of doing so.

Cadets stay at the Academy for 5 1/2 months during the residential phase of the program. They may recover credits, earn their GED or, if qualified, earn their high school diploma. TCA is an accredited high school, free to the families served, and based on Equal Opportunity principles. After graduation, cadets return home and meet with a mentor every week for 12 months to keep their resolve to change their lives for the better. For more information, contact a member of our staff.



Goals of Challenge

- To teach GED preparation and marketable skills through effective education and training
- To provide a safe haven—a structured, disciplined environment in which to learn and grow
- To prepare a foundation of positive values that foster maximum educational and growth potential
- To serve by providing the opportunity to give back to the community through service to their communities
- To mentor cadets through a continuous relationship with a positive role model for 12 months following the 22-week residential phase
- Academic Excellence—designed to increase grade levels in reading and mathematics, to earn a GED or high school diploma
- Leadership and followership—teaching positive roles within social groups
- Responsible Citizenship—understanding civic responsibilities and social accountability
- Job Skills and Vocational Training—resume writing, job interview skills, and career exploration
- Life Skills—teamwork skills, anger management, drug and alcohol avoidance strategies
- Health & Hygiene—nutrition basics, substance abuse awareness, and positive relationship skills
- Volunteer Service—performing at least 40 hours of service to the community
- Physical Fitness—daily fitness activities and intramural sports

The 8 Core Components

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HISTORY & BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT TCA

The Texas ChalleNGe Academy, formerly Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps, became part of the National Guard's Youth ChalleNGe Program in July, 1999 as the program's 26th state. Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps was an initiative of Texas A&M University at Galveston, the United States Navy, AmeriCorps, and the Texas National Guard. Due to the devastation of Hurricane Ike's landfall on Galveston Island, the program was relocated to Sheffield in West Texas.

The Texas ChalleNGe Academy, now in its 16th year, is an accredited high school based on a quasi-military training curriculum and an academic partnership with the Iraan/Sheffield Independent School District. Teens, ages 16 through 18, from across the state begin classes in either July or January each year. They must be committed to five-and-a-half months of residential education and training, followed by twelve months of mentoring in their home communities. TCA cadets are offered the opportunity for high school credit recovery, obtaining their GEDs, and in some cases, earning their high school diplomas.

TCA is free to the families we serve, with funding provided by both the federal and state governments, as well as private foundations. TCA is open to all students without regard to race, sex, religious affiliation, or household income. Prospective cadets must fill out an application, attend an orientation in Sheffield, and submit to an on-site interview to determine their suitability and their likelihood of success in the program.

The Texas ChalleNGe Academy is ***not*** a juvenile detention center, a court-ordered boot camp, nor a drug or alcohol treatment center. It is not affiliated with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or the Texas Youth Commission, nor does it require military service from cadets.





TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATE

ERIC CAPUANO

**FORMER AIR FORCE STAFF SERGEANT WORKING
ON PREDATOR AND REAPER AIRCRAFT
NOW ENGINEERING TECH WITH SAMSUNG
TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD—
CYBER SECURITY SPECIALIST**



“Setting foot at Seaborne Challenge Corps, as it was known at the time, I had no idea that I'd ever be capable of anything noteworthy in my life. Being a 'poor performer' in the public school system basically drained me of any self-confidence or aspirations of a greater future.”

“Setting foot in Seaborne (Texas Challenge Academy), as it was known at the time, I had no idea that I'd ever be capable of anything noteworthy in my life. Being a 'poor performer' in the public school system basically drained me of any self-confidence or aspirations of a greater future.”

Seaborne Challenge was the turning point for me, as most graduates will agree. I left that school with confidence and pride a mile wide and went on to do things that still surprise me to this day. But I never forgot where I found that confidence and the opportunity which unlocked that capability in me.

I was a Staff Sergeant in the Air Force working on Predator and Reaper drone aircraft. Since then, I've separated from active duty and began working full-time for Samsung in Austin, Texas as an engineering technician responsible for making microprocessors. I still hold my job with Samsung but have spent the last two years serving full-time with the Texas Air National Guard as a cyber security specialist working in a highly classified environment with some of the nation's most cutting-edge computer systems. In this position, it is my responsibility to analyze threats to the infrastructure of the Air Force and develop tactics and techniques to mitigate those threats. I spend my free-time tinkering in robotics and engineering and have founded the Central Texas chapter of a community for operators of small civilian drone aircraft. This group's primary goal is promoting the use of flying robots for civilian, recreational, agricultural, search and rescue as well as hobby purposes. Our larger community is 3000+ members strong worldwide.

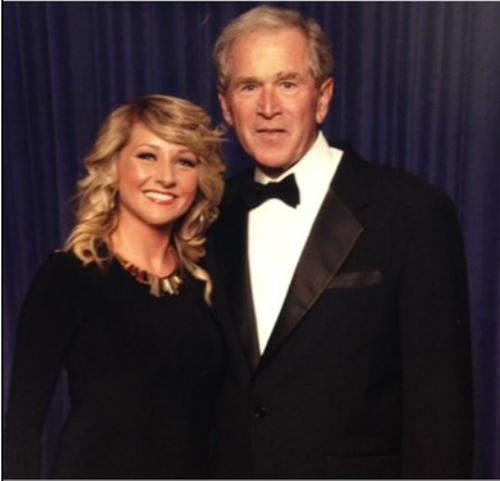
“Without the education, confidence and motivation I gained as a graduate of the Texas Challenge Program, I couldn't have started the career I have nor experienced the success that I have been so fortunate to experience. I feel that one of the most important things I can do is instill a confidence in those kids that I know I longed for at that age.”



TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATE

TESS HAWKINS

**US NAVY, DECORATED IRAQ VET,
RICE UNIVERSITY'S BAKER FOUNDATION**



“Early in my youth, I began to experiment with drugs and alcohol. The experimenting led to drug addiction, running away from home, and dropping out of high school. In January, 2003, I was accepted into Seaborne Challenge Corps (Texas Challenge). I was selected Squad Leader and Platoon Leader, earned my GED and graduated in 2003. I enlisted in the US Navy at 18 and, during that time, participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

Texas Challenge graduate and Baker Foundation aide Tess Hawkins with President George W. Bush.

“I grew up in a middle class family in the suburbs of Kingwood where I was once an ‘A—B’ student and a competitive cheerleader at my 5-A high school. Early in my youth, I began to experiment with drugs and alcohol. The experimenting led to drug addiction, running away from home and school attendance issues. Shortly after starting my junior year of high school, I dropped out. At that point, my mom had felt that there was little hope for me. I would either end up dead on the streets or in jail at the age of 17.

In January, 2003, I was accepted into SeaBorne Challenge Corps where I was selected as Squad Leader and Platoon Sgt. I was also able to earn my GED and graduate in June.

In November, 2003, I enlisted in the US Navy at the age of 18. I spent Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Eve away from my family for the first time in my life, but that would prepare me for many deployments.

In March, 2004, I was assigned to the USS Nimitz in San Diego where I spent three years onboard. I spent eight months the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In November, 2009, I was onboard the USS Carl Vinson where we were dispatched to Haiti as first responders after the hurricane and later was in the Arabian Gulf when Osama bin Laden was buried at sea off the deck. In October, 2011, I was assigned to the Space and Warfare Command in San Diego. I was honorably discharged from the Navy after nine years.

I recently earned my associates degree and am enrolled in a Bachelor’s program. Without Challenge, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”



TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATE

CHRIS HINES

USMC, DECORATED IRAQ VET, POLICE OFFICER

“When I was in high school, I did my best work in an in-school suspension program. When I had no structure, I spent my time with friends vandalizing property, drinking, and other things I shouldn’t, so my mother told me, it was either Challenge or jail.”

“When I went to Seaborne Challenge Corps (now TCA) in August of 2003, I learned a lot about leadership and service to others. I got my GED and while I was there I was inspired to serve my country as a Marine infantryman. I had my first deployment to Anbar Province in Iraq in March, 2005. During my second deployment in August, 2006, I volunteered for the advanced party to go in and prepare the area before the rest of the battalion arrived. Unfortunately, I was seriously wounded by an IED. After receiving a medical discharge, I returned to Austin and enrolled in Austin Community College on the GI Bill. I decided to serve the State of Texas as a police officer. Without my training at Challenge, I would never have come this far.”



Decorated Marine and Texas Challenge grad Chris Hines appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show honoring brave soldiers who, even though they had been seriously injured in combat, had shown great courage in the field.

Awards Received by Chris Hines as a Marine

*Purple Heart
Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal
Iraqi Campaign Medal
Global War on Terrorism Medal
Good Conduct Medal
National Defense Service Medal*



TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY GRADUATE

STEPHANIE BERTRAND

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, AND SAFETY MGR
CHEVRON PHILLIPS CHEMICALS



“As a young teenager, I didn’t make the right choices in life and I wasn’t the model child by far. I started getting arrested at thirteen years old for stealing my parent’s cars and running away. I was always in the detention center for fighting and skipping school until finally I was forced to drop out in the eighth grade after becoming pregnant at fourteen years old.”

It wasn’t until my daughter was born when reality finally hit me! All my friends were having fun, getting ready for high school and actually getting to enjoy their teenage years while I was a young mother with a world of responsibility ahead of me at such a young age. How could I do this to myself?” I would ask myself that question every night as I cried myself to sleep.

Since graduation I’ve had several wonderful job opportunities and two beautiful daughters that both look up to me. My oldest daughter even remembers coming to visit me on family days. I’m currently an Environmental, Health and Safety Manager for Brock Service (industrial, construction contractor) at Chevron Phillips Chemical Plant in Baytown Texas. I’ve been in the industry for over 13 years and in management since I was 25 years old in a male-dominated industry. I am still utilizing the strong ethics and leadership skills that I received from Seaborne.

“Thanks to Texas Challenge, I was blessed with a second chance to make something of myself, become part of something positive, learn the true meaning of TEAM and become someone my daughters can look up to with pride. I can honestly say that without the encouragement and genuinely caring staff, I wouldn’t be where I am today...taking with me priceless memories and lifelong friendships.”



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KUDOS & THANKS

“Our society runs on disposable goods. Items are used, thrown away, and quickly forgotten. As a professional educator and counselor for more than 24 years, I unfortunately see this ‘disposal’ attitude applied to students. Unwise choices made by students can cause them to drop out of high school with little to no means of finding a career to support themselves. Hope is lost and the students continue into a vacuum of never finding a way back into productive society. The Texas National Guard Youth Challenge Program offers an alternative to combat this ‘disposable’ child attitude. TCA works tirelessly to instill an education, mental and physical strength, and above all, the desire to make good choices. The Academy literally turns lives around one cadet at a time. They give the young adults role models and support to achieve their dreams. I highly support the Texas Challenge Academy for their insight into students and their intense mission to reveal the students’ given gifts needed for a successful life.”

Glen-Ellen Hancock, M.Ed., LPC, NCC, RPT
Texas Counseling Association Counselor of the Year—2010

“Last year, I became aware of a program that I now consider to be outstanding in reaching and turning around young people at risk of not finishing high school. Texas Challenge Academy is a National Guard program established in Texas about 15 years ago. Twice a year, they begin a class at their facility in Sheffield, Texas at no cost to teens 16—18 who have applied for admission. Almost all of the cadets were destined to lead difficult lives without much hope for success. After 5 months in-residence, almost all graduate with a least a GED, some with high school diplomas and a real plan for their future. Graduates go back to their high school to finish their diploma, join the military, enter trade and technical schools and colleges and/or join the workforce as productive and contributing members of society. Most importantly, they walk away with a new found confidence in themselves and a real appreciation for those around them. In my estimation, Texas Challenge Academy is nothing short of phenomenal.

Matt Hayes
Justice of the Peace, Tarrant Country Precinct 7

“We Can’t Thank You Enough”

When my 16 year old son came home for his first liberty, we were so very proud of him. When we picked him up, he was standing up straight with his shoulders back, proud of the changes he had made. The change in him is a miracle. We sent a child and TCA is making him a man. He is so proud of what he’s been able to do physically, and still pushes himself beyond what he feels is his limit. Thank God for TCA. Our son is out there doing what he thought was impossible. He’s learned to have faith in himself. Our thanks and prayers go out to everyone at TCA.”

All our gratitude,
Mike and Deana

Before my son went to TCA in Sheffield in January, he was on the wrong road, making bad decisions for himself. We were looking at fines for him not going to school. My husband and I went to the principal and told him we were out of answers and we had nowhere to go from here. He told us about Texas Challenge Academy. My son, Steven, agreed to go, and he was made to see that he does have a future and that he is worth something. He now has self-esteem, self-worth, and pride in himself. Because of Texas Challenge Academy and Steven’s hard work, he took the oath to join the Air Force to train to be a pilot - a dream of his since childhood.”

Schona Moore, proud parent of Steven Moore, Jr.

“I don’t know all of your names, but this thank you card goes to all of you. You have to have passion and belief in what you’re doing every day. I am amazed at your program and what you do. Because of your program, my son has been rescued. Thanks for caring about these kids!”

Cliff and Lisa Davis



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LIFE CHANGES AT TEXAS CHALLENGE ACADEMY

“Before I came to TCA, I was constantly in trouble back at home. I wasn’t going to school. I was getting into fights, breaking my probation, and I cut off my ankle monitor just because I couldn’t wear my boots with it on. My parents started looking at TCA for me after the incident with the monitor. It was either TCA or TYC (youth prison). When I got the letter that I was accepted, my parents and I were so happy. This program has allowed me to finish school early and get my GED. After I get



settled into my new and better life, I’m going to repay my parents for all of the fines and tickets that they wrongly had to pay because of me. I recommend Texas ChalleNGe Academy to anyone who is having trouble in their lives. The people at this program can help anyone who wants to be helped. The staff here become your second family for 5 ½ months.” **Tyler B**

“Life before I got to ChalleNGe was quickly headed down the wrong path for me. I began hanging with the wrong crowd, getting into fights, and I started doing drugs. I just couldn’t seem to stay out of trouble. I was throwing everything that I was working so hard for away, and it just wasn’t right, not only for myself, but for the people that were supporting me, such as my parents. My mom brought up the idea of Texas ChalleNGe Academy. Now that I’ve been at TCA, my life has totally changed. I’ve gained self-discipline and self-respect. I’m now a more motivated and dedicated person, who doesn’t give up on anything anymore. I’m also physically and mentally stronger and DRUG FREE. Challenge is hard, but it’s a great program, and I recommend it for anyone who is headed down the wrong path, and needs that second chance in life.” **Edmund S**

“I would go to school to get out of my house. I never saw it as a learning environment. I had NO discipline growing up. I did what I felt like doing and whenever I felt like doing it. I got in to some trouble with the law. I realized I was on a dangerous path and I needed to fix me fast. A counselor told me about TCA. At TCA, I’m happy and energetic, the teachers are patient, positive and caring, and love their jobs. I recovered credits, took the military entrance exam and the GED. In TCA, I found support and someone to look up to.” **Isabel A**