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## **Members of the U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Corps take lessons in rifle safety**

*By Bryce Stuckenschneider  
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Burrowed in the grass near the Central Missouri Correctional Center with rifles in hand, about 20 local youth spent Saturday learning rifle skills and safety. The U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Corps held a weekend training exercise filled with education and hands-on experience with rifles.

The Sea Cadet Corps "enlists" Missouri youth ages 10-18 who wish to learn what a career with the Navy would hold for them. Sea cadets receive training from more than just Naval officers. U.S. Marines and Coast Guard members also contribute to the sea cadet training.

In an exercise like the rifle training Saturday, cadets must first complete the necessary course work to get acclimated with the area they are studying. The cadets spent four hours in a classroom learning about rifles before they hit the range.

"First we learned how a rifle works and is put together," said 16-year-old Cadet Dalton Tolbert of Henley. "Next, we learned about the safe ways to use a rifle."

With help of local members of the Missouri Department of Conservation and NRA, the cadets left the classroom after course work and went to the range located on correctional center property.

Weekend activities like this are not foreign to the sea cadets. Last month, they traveled to Ft. Leonard Wood for Chemical and Biological Readiness (CBR) training.

"The cadets stayed in barracks and practiced suiting up in chemical suits and gas masks," said instructor Buffy Cornett, formerly of the Navy.

In addition to attending training exercises once a month, sea cadets are very involved in behind-the-scenes community service. Some of the services the sea cadets perform include cleaning the fairgrounds after the Cole County Fair, picking up trash on adopted stretches of

highway and presenting the colors for local events.

The sea cadets got a pleasant surprise on Saturday. Local members of both the U.S. Marines and Army Reserves spent time with the cadets during their training. These service members gave practical advice to the cadets to supplement their commanding officer's guidance.

"It's really fun to have the active duty guys out here," Tolbert said. "They could be doing anything else, but they're here with us, and we really appreciate it."

Tolbert's training, like that of other cadets, will not stall during the summer. Tolbert will be attending Special Warfare School in Okeechobee, Fla.

Only 30 participants are accepted nationwide, and Tolbert will be going to represent the Thomas Jefferson Division of the Corps. This unconventional "camp" will place teens including Tolbert in a completely imaginary city that they are to police while learning tactics used by active military.



Members of the U.S. Navy Cadet Corps trained Saturday at the Central Missouri Correctional Center (Church Farm) firing range. (Stephen Brooks/News Tribune)