

South Dakota National Guard

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Rapid City Central JROTC program receives national award

By Staff Sgt. Dustin Jordan - SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The Rapid City Central High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps received the 2021 Fulcrum Shield Award during a ceremony at Camp Rapid, Dec. 8, for having the top youth drug prevention program nationally.

The South Dakota Army National Guard’s Counterdrug Substance Abuse Program nominated the JROTC program for the award by for their partnership in community-based, anti-drug and substance abuse messaging.

The Fulcrum Shield Award is presented by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter-Narcotics to recognize youth organizations affiliated with the military that have made recognizable strides in spreading the anti-drug message throughout their communities.

Army JROTC programs have existed since 1916 and today are in more than 1,700 schools around the country. Its mission is to motivate young people to become better citizens through classes and active involvement in community service activities. The Central High School JROTC program began in 1995.

“It’s truly an honor to receive the Fulcrum Shield Award,” said Kristi Palmer, with the SDARNG Counterdrug Substance Abuse Program. “This award validates all of our hard work through our community partnerships and the JROTC. Being recognized with the top youth drug prevention program in the nation is a big deal!”

The award, first presented in 2002, is named in honor of five military personnel from Fort Bliss, Texas, who were killed in an aircraft accident in 1999 while on a counter-drug reconnaissance mission in Columbia.

A cadet chain of command and staff lead the JROTC program at CHS. Students who demonstrate commitment, drive, and leadership manage the organization and select community service activities to support.

Central High School JROTC has partnered with the SDARNG Red Ribbon Committee since 1996 to show the Red Ribbon Week Spirit in Rapid City schools and the community. During RRW, JROTC volunteers to help with events to keep the mission a success.

“The South Dakota National Guard has a history of working with the Central High School JROTC during Red Ribbon Week and throughout the school year,” said Palmer. “The JROTC cadets provide a drill team ceremony at our RRW kick-off event and tie the ribbons on the presidents (statues) in downtown Rapid City. The cadets have marched in the RRW parade, provided judges for our RRW billboard contest, and supported our counterdrug team with climbing wall mission support.”

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Central High School JROTC has grown in attendance since 1995. The first year of the program there were 90 cadets enrolled in the program. That number peaked in 2011 to 220 cadets and currently averages 150 cadets in the program.

The JROTC program started to perform small community service projects at the beginning of the program and currently performs over 1,000 hours of community service projects or services to help the community.

The JROTC has grown in their partnership with the SDARNG over the years. The addition of their volunteer time with RRW activities has had huge impacts on raising the awareness of drug prevention in the community.

“Since coming to the program, I’ve seen our relationship with the SDARNG grow tremendously,” said 1st Sgt. Ryan Wheele, JROTC senior instructor. “Having this strong partnership has allowed us to integrate many resources and capabilities of the SDARNG into our training opportunities for cadets.”

The cadets expanded their drug prevention involvement over the years to supplement the message by selecting the SDARNG Counterdrug program.

“While many of the benefits of our partnership with the SDARNG are tangible, such as access to facilities, training resources, etc., others such as mentorship, professional role modeling, and sharing the desire to serve offer many unique experiences and interactions for our cadets that typical high school students don’t have access to,” said Wheele. “Having these first-hand experiences is likely a driving factor in the propensity to serve among our senior cadets, as many choose military service as their primary post-secondary option. Ultimately, the SDARNG helps bring our program to life in a way that would otherwise not be possible, and we are very thankful for their service and continued support.”

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211208-Z-BS230-0179: Cadets from the Central High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, sponsored by the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Army Substance Abuse Program, receive the 2021 Fulcrum Shield Award during a ceremony in Rapid City, S.D., Dec. 8, 2021, for their community-based anti-drug and substance abuse messaging. Presenting the award included retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Ray Carpenter, civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, left, and Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dustin Jordan)



211208-Z-BS230-1080: U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general, addresses Rapid City Central High School JROTC cadets during the presentation of the 2021 Fulcrum Shield Award in Rapid City, S.D., Dec. 8., 2021. The Fulcrum Shield Award was created by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter-Narcotics to recognize youth organizations affiliated with the military that have made recognizable strides in spreading the anti-drug message throughout their communities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dustin Jordan)



211208-Z-BS230-1082: Retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Ray Carpenter, civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army, addresses Rapid City Central High School JROTC Cadets during the presentation of the 2021 Fulcrum Shield Award in Rapid City, S.D., Dec. 8, 2021. The Fulcrum Shield Award was created by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter-Narcotics to recognize youth organizations affiliated with the military that have made recognizable strides in spreading the anti-drug message throughout their communities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dustin Jordan)