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‘Building leaders of the future’

Arndt, Castein win major awards at 34th annual cadet review

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VALLEY — A hush fell over the crowd as the winner of the Lord Strathcona Medal was moments away from being presented to a cadet from the 2928 Royal Canadian Army Cadets Corps.

The prestigious award, presented to the cadet who has shown exemplary performance in physical and military training, was one of the highlights of the 34th annual review Sunday.

“My heart was pounding. I was hopeful but still on edge,” said Warrant Officer Vernon Arndt, the proud recipient. “It feels good to be recognized for all my hard work. It paid off.”

Arndt dedicated himself to his weekly cadet and biathlon responsibilities, as well as weekend training and events for more than three consecutive months. “I was expecting some kind of an award, but I didn’t know what it would be.”

Arndt just completed his fourth year with the cadet program and hopes to spend the summer travelling with cadets to Germany and then to France for a outdoor survival expedition.

As he reviews his time with the cadets, Arndt realizes he has grown as a person. “I’m more mature because I’m more disciplined and I’ve learned how to respect people and I’m more aware of what’s going on in the community and world.”

Another top award winner was Warrant Officer Francis Castein. She earned multiple awards including the Major General Howard Medal for Top Cadet in Nova Scotia out of 1,400 recipients in her level. She also took home the Colonel Perron National Fitness Award and Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence.

“I’m really proud to say I got them ... it’s not easy and I’m so proud of myself,” said Castein. Another aspect of her cadet experience she’s pleased with is climbing in rank. “I can now teach other cadets ... it’s nice to be in a position of authority.” Castein will attend cadet camp in Rocky Mountain, Alta. this summer.

Commanding Officer and Captain Keri Winkelaar said the review is a time for cadets to examine their accomplishments and set goals for next year. And, she said, all cadets have excelled. “They all started shy but you could see in their eyes they had the desire to achieve ... we are building leaders of the future,” she said.

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