*** WESTERN WINGS ***

YOUR CONNECTICUT WING

WESTERN GROUP NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL ISSUE JULY 2015

** THE HONOR TO BE THE FIRST IS EARNED BY FEW **

C/Lt COL MATTHEW McCANDLESS FIRST RECIPIENT OF SPACE ITEMS

A very special award ceremony was held June 23rd at City Hall in Waterbury, Ct. to honor both the CAP and civilian accomplishments of Cadet Lt Col Matthew McCandless of the 143rd Composite Squadron . He is the first recipient of the unique challenge coins and squadron patches that flew in space aboard an Up Aerospace commercial rocket from Spaceport America in New Mexico last October. The launch story was featured in the April - June issue of the Volunteer, and included the front cover photo.

Upon the items returning safely to earth, the squadron established the criteria by which recipients are chosen. Cadet McCandless met every standard, and well beyond, easily earning him the right to be the first honored recipient.

Cadet McCandless joined CAP in 2007 and achieved the rank of C/Lt Col in 2012. He is a graduate of of the Northeast Region Cadet Leadership School and Air Force Advanced Technology Academy. He is qualified in Emergency Services as Ground Team Member, GTM1.

Ct.143rd Composite Squadron Commander Capt. Paul Beliveau and Cadet McCandless is pictured above with awards

He served as a staff member on multiple Ct.Wing summer encampments in positions of Administrative Officer, Public Affairs Officer, and Deputy Commanding Officer. At the squadron level, he served as Flight Sgt., Flight Commander, Supply Officer, Training Officer, Deputy Commander, Executive Officer and Cadet Commander.

He has earned numerous awards and ribbons including: CAP Achievement Award (4 times), Service ribbon, Search “Find“ Ribbon, Presidential Disaster Relief Ribbon, Community Service Ribbon, Cadet Advisory Ribbon, Cadet Recruiting Ribbon, Encampment Ribbon, and Cadet Special Activities Ribbon.

Cadet McCandless has chosen to serve our country even further by enlisting in our United States Air Force as a Signal Intelligence Analyst. His induction date is July 7th.

His community life is also rich with steady service to his church and youth groups. He also participated in a mission trip to the Bahamas in 2014 to work with orphaned and homeless children. He also volunteers as a brown belt instructor in Tae-kwon-do at a local school.

Ct.Wing Vice Commander Lt Col Darren Cioffi is seen presenting the CAP Outstanding Duty Achievement Award to cadet McCandless

Among the six total awards presented to Cadet McCandless on June 23rd were the beautifully framed and engraved challenge coin and squadron patch with the SL-9 rocket designation embroidered into it. His lucky number is 16, and that is the numbered coin he was presented with. Both items have their certificates of authenticity from Up Aerospace in the framing. Also presented to him were the CAP Outstanding Achievement Award, a City of Waterbury Mayor's Citation, and two award citations from Connecticut Representatives.

The Waterbury squadron shall always be indebted to Cadet McCandless's solid leadership and willingness to assist others in their pursuit of excellence. His gentle manner, grace and humility are attributes that others seek but may never attain. We are all the better for having had this outstanding cadet as part of the CAP team. To a person, we wish Cadet McCandless the best, as his life continues to unfold and his leadership grows to benefit all mankind.

Story and Photos by 1Lt James A. Keaney PAO/CT-011/Western Group