ALAMANCE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA • THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008

A "high" calling for Elon homeschooler

Senior receives appointment to U.S. Air Force Academy

Staff Writer

Dressed in shorts and pretty in olonde curls, Kirsten Buslinger is serving just-baked warm cookies and talking about her family's rural Elon meat

"I think we're up to 20 babies—we've got little ones running around now from 1 ½ days to two weeks old," she

Kirsten might be any wholesome country girl. But that description only skims the surface of the 18-year-old home school senior's persona.



The cadet-to-be in her Civil Air Patrol (CAP) uniform. She is a CAP cadet Lieutenant colonel and her unit's cadet squadron commander.

Beneath her friendly smile and sincere, welcoming demeanor lie a steely determination and a penchant for excellence and leadership. Just the sort

Kirsten Buslinger holds one of the young goats she is helping to raise on her family's farm. of qualities the U.S. Air Force is looking for in its future officers.

Kirsten received her appointment to the highly competitive United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado in January after receiving a "letter of assurance" from the academy in November.

She will report in June and undergo basic training before being named a Fourth-Class cadet (the equivalent of freshman status at a traditional col-

Getting into the Air Force Academy is no small accomplishment. The process begins with a "precandidate questionnaire," the first sieve through which aspiring cadets must pass.

Next, students must be nominated to the elite school by a U.S. senator or congressman, each of whom may nominate up to 10 students based on high school transcripts, SAT/ACT scores, a resume, lengthy essay, and letters of recommendation from authority figures well ac-

quainted with the student. In Kirsten's case, she was nominated

"Perhaps you should consider bigger goals," it challenges. "Deeper learning. And a more rewarding future.

"Here," continues the challenge, 'you'll get a world-class education. The opportunity to fly. And a guaranteed career right out of college. You'll create bonds that last a lifetime. And you'll develop into something-and someone-extraordinary."

It seems that this home schooled student has gotten an impressive jumpstart on that process.

She has been dually enrolled, since 10th grade, in Piedmont Community College and in the family's home school with brother, Will, who is three years younger. (Sister Lauren, 25, works at the National History Museum in Raleigh).

"Most of my classes are at PCC," she clarifies, adding that she "did Calculus I [there]; that was my real test [of] whether I'm ready for college."

She earned an "A" in the class.

At home, Kirsten, who plans to major in biochemistry at the academy, studied the rigorous Apologia science program. "I taught myself in that," she says matter-of-factly.

"She was so self-motivated,' her mother marvels.

Beyond academics, the cadet-to-be has been preparing for the role since her eighth grade year, when "a friend down the road" took her and her father, David, to a meeting of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), an auxiliary of the Air

"I was hooked," she recalls, adding a family historical note: "Dad went to the [Air Force] Academy for a short period of time, but broke his arm playing football for them."

Kirsten entered CAP's cadet training program for teens, where she learned drill and teamwork and spent three summers at Fort Pickett, Virginia. Remembering the first of those sum-

mers, as a "basic" at the encampment, she jokes, "You learn to get yelled at. We falso get to go flying in helicopters, rappelling, [do] obstacle courses, [and] lots of physical training, too,"

The second summer, she returned as

(See AIR FORCE, 8B)

Ex-biker takes Jesus to the streets

By SHELLEY D'ALMADA

Staff Writer

Gene "Bones" Boswell sums up his life this way: "I'm a three-time loser, but a one-time winner." Tattooed from his near-bald head

down, wearing a black leather vest and multiple earrings, Boswell still looks the part of the biker he was from the late 1970's through the mid-1980's.

He explains his statement: he was sent to prison three times on felony con-

When he exited prison for the last time in November of 2003, the ex-con says, he was "a crackhead" and "a general in Satan's army; life didn't mean nothing to me."

That was before Boswell met D.Q. Roberts, who, together with his wife, Beth, founded Christian Riders Ministry in 1991.

'The Lord brought him to me as a vessel." says the ex-biker. "[Before that], I was doing drugs and had been in rehab three times.



Boswell talks with children as they watch a puppet show.

victions before he handed his life over to Jesus Christ and became committed to spreading the gospel.

"The first time I thought I was a thief, but I didn't do too good at it," Boswell recounts with a chuckle. The second time, I wasn't any good at it. The third, I switched over to doing drugs."

Boswell's spiritual about-turn did not happen in prison, and although he believes that genuine life change can happen in that setting, he also believes the security of the prison walls make the appearance of change "easy" to main-

"When you get out, all of [the temptations] of the world [are] still there. The seed has to be planted deep."

"I met my wife in '93 and enabled her to use cocaine. I went through \$350,000 in a year – my father had died and left me an inheritance. I [suddenly] had more friends than Carter had liver

After going through the money, the "friends," and multiple jobs ("Most people thought I was an alcoholic"), Boswell met Roberts.

"He put a \$200 Pentecostal handshake in a drug addict's hand. I cried that day. December 14, 2003, I submitted to the will of Jesus Christ; He [Christ] said, 'You're not an addict; you don't need recovery.' Two months later, He took that addiction away [and, the same year, a smoking addiction].'

In the beginning, he carried a bag on his shoulder. Later, the fledgling ministry "progressed to tents" and volunteers "started holding up signs." Lost Souls Ministry was incorporated in September of 2005 and given

handing out Bibles.

Armed with not much more than a zeal to spread the good news that had changed both of their lives, Boswell and his wife, Brenda, began "walking the streets [of Burlington]"

tax exempt, non profit status. It has "been growing ever since," a flyer summarizes. The former biker is as eager to reach

the biking "community" (Lost Souls went on the road to the Daytona Bikeweek and Bikefest at the end of February) as he is street people, those in housing projects, children, and anyone else who will listen.

"The thing about a street ministry," he comments, "is [that] it is for everyby me; he does what He wants to."

Equipped with a tent, a puppet stage, portable baptistry, and ministry volunteers, Boswell says that the ministry tries "to go to underprivileged neighborhoods" in and around Burlington.

Working with the Weed and Seed Initiative, a police effort which calls itself "a law enforcement strategy to improve the quality of life in East Burlington," and with local churches in Burlington and other surrounding towns, Lost Souls goes into housing projects with its Christian message of hope.

"Helping a hurting and dying world starts in your own community," say ministry materials. "You don't have to look abroad to see the hungry, the poor, the lost, the abused. They are all

Boswell has appeared before local city councils to request the closing of streets to facilitate what he calls "a day in the park" for residents of underprivileged neighborhoods.

One of those festive days, for example, found Lost Souls' volunteers at Mebane's Tanglewood Apartments complex, where they organized Frisbee and kickball games, temporary tattoos applied by Boswell, bubble blowing, hotdogs and drinks, and music (pro-



His "biker style" leather vest with ministry patches.

one. [The apostle] Paul said, 'I am all things to all men'; I can go anywhere and be anything for any man that God needs to use me for. God's not limited

Gene "Bones" Boswell "on the street."

by both senator Richard Burr and con-

both the first and second hurdles, hope-

fuls receive a "candidate kit" detailing

next steps in the process and must pass

an academy medical exam and candi-

date fitness assessment during their

Although it has no shortage of appli-

cants (Kirsten and her mother, Ruth,

estimate that 900-1,000 of about 10,000

applicants per year are accepted), like

other colleges, the academy encourages

high school students to consider it as

Having successfully passed through

gressman Brad Miller.

senior high school year.

vided by Travis May of Greater Love World Outreach, of which the Boswells are members).

(See LOST SOULS MINISTRY, 8B)

(Continued from 1B)

at Mebane's Tanglewood Apartments complex, where they organized Frisbee and kickball games, temporary tattoos applied by Boswell, bubble blowing, hotdogs and drinks, and music (provided by Travis May of Greater Love World Outreach, of which the Boswells are members).

And of course, there was street preaching. Tanglewood event got the assistance of nearby Breakthrough Community Church and pastor Wayne Miller.

The ministry's founder would like, he says, to see all denominations working together. "God's goal is that the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, evangelicals [come together for a common causel."

The "Lost Souls Children Street Ministry" is an integral part of the group's mission, and is designed to share the gospel with "boys and girls age 12 and under who have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ" and to follow up with discipling and connection with a local church and Sunday school.

"We've got a new puppet stage," Boswell enthuses. 'Brothers of mine from Kernersville built it for me." The puppet stage is set up for

street festivals, biker gatherings, or anywhere Lost Souls can get a venue.

"Bikers take their children and we don't want them in a lewd atmosphere, so we try to take them to a separate area [for the puppet show, games, etc]."

The ministry gives out New Testaments to children who do not own one, and provides Bible correspondence courses to those who register for them. Lost Souls' efforts to reach

children "really looks like 70 percent of our ministry, but it's 50-50," Boswell remarks, adding, "God's a 50-50 God; if the children come, [sometimes] the parents will.'

For the adults, he says, "We try to have men minister to men and women to women, and in twos. Jesus sent his disciples out in twos."

The ex-biker has been ordained through Greater Love World Outreach. He is also a member of the Piedmont Men of Steel, which seeks to "engage, equip, and empower" men as Christians. It is one of over 20 ministries under the church's "umbrella."

To become more aware of the human environment they are entering in underprivileged neighborhoods, Boswell says that he and others from the group recently "went down [to] the Alamance County Sheriff's Department and did some gang training."

Lost Souls Ministry is over-



seen by a board of directors which has recently voted in a new set of bylaws.

The latest member of the board is Herbert "Herbie" Spruill, an ordained minister who has long been part of the Graham-based New Directions International ministry and its singing group.

Spruill is wheel-chair bound due to cerebral palsy which affects his legs. He does "a lot of counseling" with the street ministry, says Boswell.

Lost Souls is supported by donations from churches and individuals. "This is the first year

that I'll receive a salary," the founder explains. "God comes first; these people out there come second; I come third." Because of his wife's work as

"CNA Med Tech" at Burlington's Dogwood assisted living facility, he has been able to give his time to the minis-"God put us together," he af-

tional woman; she stayed with me 19 years – only four years with Christ." The ex-biker's appreciation

firms. "[Brenda] is an excep-

for his parents has also grown over the years since he began his journey with Christ.

"I was born and raised in Burlington [an only child] by two well-adjusted Christians who wanted me to have more than they had," he reflects. "I was from a well-to-do family, [but] learned to fight at an early age. I came to know the Lord in '67 and left him by '69."

He also left school, dropping out of Graham High in the ninth grade after integration efforts required that he be bussed there from Burlington.

Today, it seems, Boswell sees his rough past as an advantage when it comes to relating to others' troubles.

"There's a lot of people I can touch now. I still go to bars, but I drink Pepsi. You can't scare [anybody] off; nobody's gonna come to the Lord until [He draws them]."

Another tough crowd that Boswell has been able to "touch" is truckers. As a chaplain with Transport for Christ, he preaches to drivers of big

rigs every Thursday. "Serving the Lord is fun!" the transformed ex-con proclaims, as if the happy sentiment welled up within him and burst forth spontaneously.

thoughts, some lighthearted, others reflective or even somber, overflow in Boswell's conversation:

Other, probably oft-repeated

"I am religious; I get up and drink coffee religiously every morning."

"God's always talking; we're just not always listening."

"There's two rules: 1) There's always gonna be sinners and people [will] die and go to hell. 2) The pastor can't change rule number one." Asked to compare his "before

and after" lives, Boswell answers, "I had a good time [before], but, comparatively, I have a better time [now] and I do it sober. It's awesome, it's great and a whole bunch of other words. The best definition would be joy."

Lost Souls Ministry can be contacted at: 227-7155.

Air Force

(Continued from 1B)

spent three summers at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Remembering the first of those summers, as a "basic" at the encampment, she jokes, "You learn to get yelled at. We [also] get to go flying in helicopters, rappelling, [do] obstacle courses, [and] lots of physical training, too.' The second summer, she re-

turned as a flight sergeant. "As a sergeant, you're the mother duck of the flight," Kirsten explains, "You want to learn to work with your own flight to keep morale high." Part of that process, paradoxi-

cally, is yelling at the cadets under her wing. "The first day you want to scare them a little; then, it gets more relaxed.'

"She has a completely different personality when she's up there," says Ruth. "[Her time as a staff sergeant] was when she really realized she likes to boss people around. It's pretty severe up there.''

Kirsten spent the past summer at Fort Pickett as a squadron commander, having attained the CAP rank of lieutenant coloiei wnich she currently holds.

She has also visited Marine and Navy bases, but concludes, 'I really like the Air Force base. I just liked the planes and I saw at Fort Pickett [that] they treat their people well."

"They [the Air Force] put her

Canaveral," recalls her mother. "They're trying to get these kids who [are] CAP cadets to go into the Air Force or NASA. It was a week that she learned all about space command."

The same summer, Ruth notes, "She won an essay contest," delivering the finished product in a speech to Air Force veterans, and was awarded with a week at [the] Huntsville, Alabama Advanced Space Academy.

Military training and leadership are not the only ways in which Kirsten has proven to be determined and self-motivated.

The Buslinger family has been involved for years with 4-H Clubs, and their middle child has won, Ruth says, "some pretty good awards for poultry judging and wildlife habitat evaluation."

She is also a competitive pianist (she'll be competing in the state Federation of Music Clubs contest this week) and likes to play for weddings: "I just finished up a wedding, and hopefully will play for my cousin's wedding at the end of May."

To say that Kirsten is a "wellrounded" young woman would be a real understatement, a factor which probably played a part in making her an early pick for the academy (the majority receive appointments in March).

She and other appointees will spend much of their first summer in basic training, or BCT, described as "a rigorous, fiveweek orientation program that introduces you to military life.

"Your performance and atti-

tude in this program will strongly influence your future success at the Academy, so be sure you understand that BCT is a very serious undertaking," appointees are warned.

BCT is conducted in two phases. In the first, in the "cadet area," upper-class cadets give instruction in customs, courtesies, the Honor Code ("We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does"), Air Force heritage, marching, and room inspection. The first phase also includes

"strenuous exercises, running and competitive sports. Between phases, squadrons

compete in a field day to determine which will be named the "honor squadron.'

Phase II of BCT is held in Jack's Valley, a wooded area on the grounds of the academy. The cadet hopefuls are told that the phase will "push you to your physical limits and build within you confidence." Familiarity with small-unit tactics and firearms is also stressed.

BCT concludes, for those who complete it, with an acceptance parade in which fourth-class shoulder boards and acceptance into the cadet wing are bestowed.

Cadets choose from among 32 majors, ranging from aeronautical engineering to economics and computer science to legal studies, political science and space operations.

Benefits for cadets include full tuition, room and board, medical care, a monthly stipend of \$700 per month and a \$5.75 per day food allowance, interest free loans for emergency situations. and low-cost life insurance.

In return for their four years of study, training, and other benefits, graduates must serve a minimum of five years as an Air Force officer following graduation. During those years, they may also work on a graduate degree if approval is given.

Kirsten is considering the Air Force as a career "at least for a few years," she says, "[and] if they put me through medical school, which is my plan, a good long while after that."

Echoing one of the academy's "Core Values," she adds, "It's service before self—if they want you to be [something else], you're the officer first and your job comes next."

The absorption of such values is part of the fabric of the life of an Air Force Cadet. The academy's Character and Leadership Education Division facilitates "character enrichment in a developmental fashion, beginning with personal understanding, moving to interpersonal skills, [then to] understanding of the importance of servant leadership [and finally to] analyzing ethical dilemmas." The "fourth-class" system is

also woven into that fabric, and "prescribes the manner in which Fourth-Class cadets behave toward other cadets and officers." The words "pecking order" might well describe this, the academy's own brand of official initiation. But it is not an arbitrary ini-

tiation, and it is not for the entertainment of higher-level stu-

"This training is for a definite purpose; to teach you to accomplish delegated tasks in a profesTOYOTA /⊕SCID⊓

sional manner, thus paving the way for progression to becoming an Air Force officer," new cadets are informed.

Like other appointees, Kirsten will not be allowed contact with her family or anyone else from outside the academy during her weeks of basic training (chaplains are always available for

After entering the cadet wing, her days will begin when she rises to put her room in (perfect) order, dress in the uniform of the day and meet for breakfast formation at 7:00 a.m. Classes and study will consume morning hours before the march to a 25-minute lunch, three more classes, study periods and military training, the evening meal and academic call to quarters at 7:00 p.m. for study. Her days will end with the playing of "Taps" at 10:30 p.m.

First year (fourth-class) cadets are not allowed to leave academy grounds, even during their free Saturday afternoons and Sundays, but may receive phone calls and visitors. They may also invite friends to balls. concerts, and other live entertainment at the academy. In subsequent years, privi-

leges are gradually increased, giving cadets "more chances to leave the Academy campus and visit the local area." Skiing is a popular pastime for older ca-

In the final months leading up to her departure for Colorado Springs. Kirsten is preparing herself physically for the higher altitude. She is an avid athlete: she has just finished up a season on a church basketball league and has done "kick boxing and running and all sorts of stuff at a gym up in Danville [Virginia].'

Still, she says, "They're [the academy] over a mile high. The altitude is so different and it's all stairs [built into mountainsides]. You get to the top and you're huffing and puffing."

To build lung capacity, she has added "running lots of hills, learning to take longer breaths and upping the amount of activity that I do." Preparing mentally and emo-

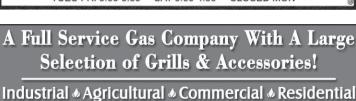
tionally is another story, both for herself and her mother. "Mom sobbed the day I got the

letter of assurance," remembers Kirsten. "My dad was really, really happy. She's super proud of me, but we're also [the] best of friends, so it's going to be hard for both of us.'

Part of the Kirsten's heart will surely stay at home on the farm. It is the kind of life she says she never wants to give up—at least not permanently.

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