

# Bonus for the Bases



Courtesy of Steve White, "Wingspread"

*By Kimberly L. Wright*

## Program Gives CAP Members New Opportunity to Support Military

CAP members, including National Chief of Staff Col. Reggie Chitwood, second from right, flank U.S. Air Force Col. Richard Clark, 12th Flying Training Wing commander, during a recent VSAF kickoff celebration at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas.

# A

A joint Air Force, Civil Air Patrol pilot program designed to augment the U.S. Air Force's existing resources and address staff shortages caused by deployments, is providing CAP with another valuable opportunity to serve America.

The Volunteer

Support to the Air Force

program, or VSAF, meshes the skills and interests of CAP volunteers with quality-of-life needs on Air Force bases. CAP volunteers participating in VSAF perform support functions that may otherwise be reduced or eliminated because of a lack of Air Force personnel to perform these tasks. VSAF may even resurrect services that have been eliminated. The specific volunteer taskings are determined on a base-by-base basis.

VSAF builds on an already well-established auxiliary partnership with the Air Force while boosting wartime and peacetime capabilities.

Following 9/11, many Americans felt compelled to volunteer in defense of the nation, but the Department of Defense did not have a structure in place. VSAF provides that structure.

Conceived at the highest levels of the U.S. Air Force by Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Craig W. Duehring, a former CAP cadet, the program is initially being offered by the 12th Flying Training Wing at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas and the 88th Air Base Wing at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

A VSAF program is also slated for Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix beginning this month.

## One-on-One

VSAF is one of the first missions CAP has undertaken in which members are working individually with Air Force personnel. CAP members usually provide services as a group.

CAP participants wear a distinctive polo and khaki



Courtesy of Steve White, "Wingspread"

Air Force Col. Richard Clark welcomes CAP visitors with a PowerPoint presentation on VSAF's potential.

uniform while performing VSAF duties. This uniform, rather than the military-style uniform CAP members usually wear, was selected for the new volunteer opportunity since members will frequently work side-by-side with Air Force civilian employees, junior enlisted personnel and dependents, many of whom may not be familiar with CAP's rank structure.

"VSAF provides greater volunteer opportunities for citizens through CAP while enhancing Air Force capabilities as a part of the Air Force's Continuum of Service program," said Duehring.

Continuum of Service is a Department of Defense initiative that focuses on eliminating barriers to service, allowing highly trained, motivated people to continue to serve their country even as their personal situations change from active-duty military to civilian volunteer.

"The members of the Civil Air Patrol, all patriotic American citizens, are proud to have this opportunity to help the brave men and women defending our country and the loved ones they leave behind when they deploy,

but before now, a structure did not exist to match volunteer capabilities with base needs,” said Interim CAP National Commander Brig. Gen. Amy Courter. “Our more than 56,000 volunteers welcome this opportunity to support the military families in their communities across the nation.”

Those who join CAP in order to perform VSAF services will be full-fledged CAP members, with the same rights and responsibilities membership entails. Cadets under the age of 18 are not yet permitted to participate.

After a successful test period, bases nationwide will be considered for participation in the program and additional areas of support will be developed. These may include staffing family readiness centers, which provide military families and single military with support they need to cope with the demands of Air Force life; fitness centers; skills development centers; libraries; and special events. Volunteers may also supplement base operations and provide squadron administrative support.

## Much-Needed Assistance

“VSAF has the potential to be a huge benefit to both the Air Force and CAP,” said Maj. Amanda Gentry, Ohio Wing Group 7 commander and CAP liaison to the Wright-Patterson AFB VSAF program. “As an official volunteer organization helping on base, we’ve now gained



access to multiple avenues to help promote VSAF and the CAP program in general.”

Volunteer opportunities include service activities at the base hospital, pass and ID, military personnel flight and civilian personnel.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Jack Burns, 12th Flying Training Wing director of staff and the base VSAF officer, said 15 vol-

unteer opportunities have been identified at Randolph AFB, including three administrative support slots and six skilled positions in civil engineering, from interior design to environmental science. In addition, five volunteer opportunities are available as golf teaching pro, landscape specialist and technical writer. ▲

*Wingspread reporter Robert Goetz and Skywrighter reporter Mike Wallace contributed to this report.*



Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Craig Duehring prepares to fly with CAP to observe firsthand a demonstration of CAP’s aerial capabilities. Duehring spoke recently to Ohio Wing’s Group 7 members during a ceremony to kick off VSAF at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

Photo by Susan Robertson, CAP National Headquarters