



**Washington Military Department**  
**WASHINGTON YOUTH ACADEMY**  
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English Teacher Tod Hall has a saying that goes to the heart of who we are at the Washington Youth Academy.

“If you squeeze a grapefruit,” he begins, “you get grapefruit juice. If you squeeze an apple, you get apple juice. If you squeeze a human being, you get character. And that’s what we do. We squeeze them. We don’t fix them.”

Mr. Hall goes beyond the call of duty when working with cadets and staff and is a walking example of the Eight Core Components that we expect from our cadets. He doesn’t just teach, he inspires. And he would be a perfect recipient to receive the National ChalleNGe Teacher of the Year honors.

Mr. Hall has been with our program from the start, joining in 2008, where he helped develop our English curriculum, which he changes to meet state guidelines and our goals.

He’s our only teacher to also receive cadre training. At times, he wears a uniform and holds the rank of captain. He’s there with the cadets and cadre participating in physical training and encouraging them to do that next push up, run that next lap and to never give up.

He doesn’t just teach in a classroom. He’ll bring his instructional lessons to the field, whether it’s at camp or a field trip to our state capital or on team building exercises. He has a way to show meaningful life lessons that help our cadets figure out key lessons.

I’ve seen students open up like never before with a song or rap they’ve written about deep life lessons and scars. Mr. Hall will bring out his guitar and start singing and the next thing we know, the students are right there learning about the structure of poetry and how words in song can be just as impactful as words on paper, if not more so.

He helped start a choir at the academy and works with National Anthem singers, many who perform at our state legislative session openings, as well as at the National Guard Youth Challenge Gala in Washington, D.C.

I’ve seen cadets go from failing English at their old high school to becoming stellar speech writers. For the past few years, our cadets have consistently won awards during the Veterans of Foreign Wars’ Voice of Democracy speech contest. Just this year, our cadets swept the awards and we have a cadet advancing to the state-level competition.

He says the secret is to get cadets to work together and support each other, but his guidance is also critical.

In addition to his academic duties, Mr. Hall lends assistance to reviewing potential legislation that could impact the academy, coordinates with our local library district to send a bookmobile to campus to ensure that cadets have appropriate books to enhance learning and represents us at school district-level meetings and training.

Hall is a credit to his profession and very deserving of this honor.

Larry Pierce  
Director  
Washington Youth Academy