

From: John Lopetrone
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2013 2:29 PM
To: Lindsay Williams
Subject: The letter I promised to you!

To Whom It May Concern;

I am Johnny Lopetrone and I am writing this on behalf of the Alaska Military Youth Academy, of which I had the great honor and privilege of being an instructor there for 15 years. I instructed the Carpentry Class and many of my Cadets were able to find good paying jobs with smaller builders as none of them had joined the Unions as of yet, and were able to earn a decent living until they decided to attend Schools of higher learning, or looked for other types of jobs such as with the lumber yards, or companies who sold and installed cabinets. I know this as many would call me asking if I would be a referral for them seeking employment.

One of the key principals of the Academy was to prepare our Cadets, who decided not to enter college, or the military to be able to find gainful employment. While I was there many of our cadets studied how to cook, some applied to learn computers and were certified after completion of the course, as many of the people I knew who attended two year course of computer training who were never certified and could not gain employment, and many attended a class at the Academy learning EMT training. There were times when I was asked by this instructor if we could set up a mock injury without his class knowing this and I would send some one from my class to his class asking for help with this injury. Their response time was great and the way they handled the mock injury was great as they worked like professionals, and I was deeply gratified that they were trained so well.

During my class cycle I was able to take my Cadets to 6 of the JATC's, (Joint Apprentice Training Centers), provided by our Union Training Centers, and they worked with our Cadets to show them what is out there if they wished to continue their Carpentry training, or could choose either to attend the Plumbers, Electrician, Heavy Equipment Training, and to NC Machine as they have a great 2 year program for those who wish to learn how to work on Caterpillar Machinery. There were times when Spenard Builders Supply would allow me to take our Cadets there and they could see and understand the engineering of trusses and see the trusses being built, and also to see the area where they build, and install Formica and other types of finishes on counter tops, etc.

Because of inflation many cuts had to be made so that the academic classes could continue unimpeded. This is no one's fault as no one knows what's going to happen from year to year. This Academy has done so many wonderful things for our troubled youth and if you could read their dossiers you would cry, and believe me it is a wonder that many of our Cadets lived long enough to attend this fantastic Academy. I know what some are going through as my father was killed in a Coal Mine accident when I was 13 months old, and my mother, God rest her soul, was never allowed to finish the 6 TH. Grade, and many of the ethnics were the same. But the one thing she pushed me to do was to educate myself, just as the Academy are trying to do with our troubled youth. You have no idea of the accomplishments of this wonderful Academy and just how hard they are working to educate and prepare our Cadet for their future lives.

Everyone in our State who is in our State Government, in our National Guard, and in our Educational offices have done a very wonderful Job trying to help keep our Academy going and helping our troubled youth. The one thing I feel is one of the most important parts of our Academy is the VO-Tec training, as this helps our Cadets to find gainful employment if they decide not to go on to higher learning or into the military. All that I am asking is that you all please find some way to return our VO-Tec training funds to this wonderful Academy.

There is one wonderful thing that happened to me while instructing at this Academy and that is my Cadets looked at me as their Papa. I once told my cadets that before they decide to do something foolish to please sit down with me and we could talk this over and I would help them in any way that I could, and if they needed a papa, I would be their Papa if they wished. Every Cadet in my classes and all the staff at the Academy called me Papa Johnny, and still do every time I visit the Academy. I feel that I was able to give these Cadets someone they could talk to and trust not to lie to them. Many a Cadet stayed after class, which was their lunch time and talked to me about their problems, at their homes, and sometimes at the academy and I was truly delighted that I could be of help to them in any way. This is another wonderful thing about our Academy as our Cadets knew they could talk to anyone and would have their attention when needed. I was the only one known as Papa Johnny. I thank you for taking the time to read my letter and hope it will help to bring the Vo-Tec training back to the Academy.

In Christ,
Johnny Lopetrone
Denali Youth Academy Board Member
Passed Carpentry Instructor
Knights of Columbus