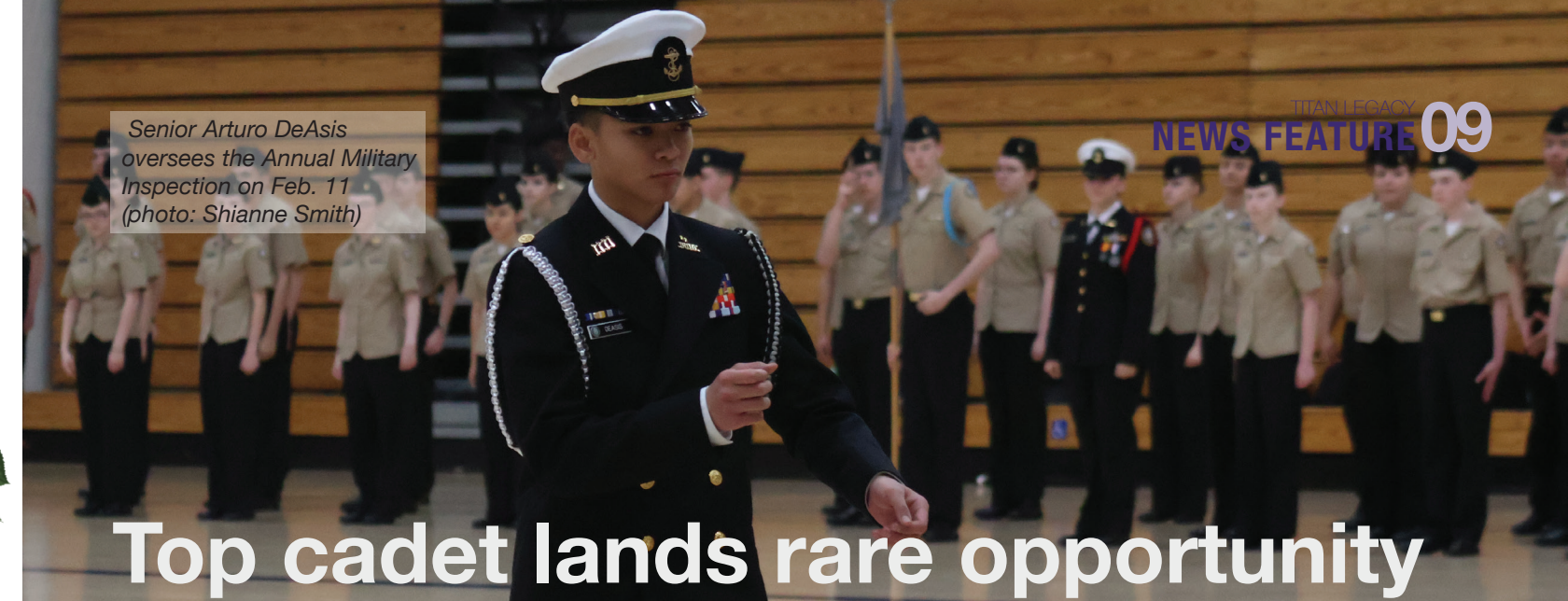




Senior Arturo DeAsis oversees the Annual Military Inspection on Feb. 11 (photo: Shianne Smith)

Top cadet lands rare opportunity

BY ALEXIS BELL

Only 14 of 300-plus NJROTC cadets nationwide who apply to the Navy & Marine Corps JROTC Flight Academy each year are chosen. This year, Papio South senior Arturo DeAsis is among those 14.

"I've always been interested in flying," DeAsis said, who serves as the student Commanding Officer for Papio South's NJROTC unit. "My dad's a pilot in the Air Force, so that's kind of what I wanted to do since I was little. And this opportunity will expose me to flying. This is like a fresh start."

DeAsis will have had no prior flying experience going into the program. His goals during Flight Academy will be to learn as much as he can while still having a good time.

"It's going to go from walking in, not knowing anything to, in like three months, having your private pilot's license," NJROTC Sr. Chief Jeff Nichols explained, who has worked with DeAsis for four years at Papio South. "That's pretty significant. That's a short, short time span to do that."

The academy is an eight-week summer STEM program, conducted at various universities such as Elizabeth City State University in North Carolina and Delaware State University in Delaware. During the Flight Academy, DeAsis will live on campus at whichever college he is assigned in a dorm with all expenses paid by the Navy. Cadets have the opportunity to earn college credit and pilot certification.

The Flight Academy encourages students toward aviation careers. It also serves to help the U.S. Air Force

and Navy to address a national pilot shortage. The program is a joint effort by the Commander, Naval Air Forces and the Naval STEM Coordination Office operating out of the Office of Naval Research in Arlington, Virginia.

"This is a Navy funded flight program, and it comes with a scholarship.

So it's all expenses paid for by the Navy," Papio South NJROTC Cmdr. Adam Schlismann said. "And it's a combination of class-

room education about things you need to know for aviation, meteorology, and some engineering. ...The nuts and bolts about how flight patterns work and air traffic control."

This program is just the beginning for DeAsis. If he likes flying, then he will continue that pursuit in college. He plans to focus on Air Force Repair Group categories and attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida. After that, he hopes to become an Air Force pilot.

"The process for this scholarship was ... very thorough," DeAsis said. "I had to do a physical PT test ... and then I had to take an actual written test that consisted of flight instruments and mathematics."

DeAsis ended up taking the written test six times: "I would just do it over and over, because I wanted to get the best score I could get," he said.

Academics have always ranked high for DeAsis, as he is also a member of National Honors Society – one

of only two in the school's NJROTC unit. Schlismann said that academic strength helped DeAsis stand out.

"I think 14 of these scholarships have something like 300-plus applicants. So do the math, that's under 5%. He's an excellent student, but the first gatekeeping requirement is GPA

and difficulty [of] course load," Schlismann said. "I think NJROTC involvement certainly helps, because it

**"My dad's a pilot in the Air Force, so that's kind of what I wanted to do since I was little."
Arturo DeAsis, 12th**

indicates a seriousness to serve in the armed forces."

Nichols agreed: "His physical fitness, being the commanding officer of the unit, tells a lot of people a lot of things. You know, there can only be one, and he's it."

As the top-ranking cadet in Papio South's NJROTC unit, DeAsis assists with out-of-state trips for competition, community service, and day-to-day management for classroom activities. Both Schlismann and Nichols said the Flight Academy made a good investment by inviting him into the program.

"I hope he comes out of it with a realistic understanding of what it takes to be a military aviator. That's what I did for my crew in the Navy," Nichols said, "and there's a lot more to it than you would think on the outside... it's very challenging, and he'll get a really good taste of that here. I think that he will take away some of the initial shock of starting the real thing in a military environment a few years from now."