

National Guard Youth Corps recruiting for new term

The Alaska National Guard Youth Corps begins recruiting for its 1996 classes with a new public service announcement featuring Alaska Senate President Drue Pearce.

Two classes will be conducted in 1996. The first will begin in March. The second in September. The Youth Corps ChalleNGe Program will accept up to 120 applicants at the start of each class.

The ChalleNGe Program is designed to help 16-18 year-old "at-risk" Alaskans from across the state who have not completed a

high school diploma program and want to get their lives on-track. There is no cost to students or families for participation in the program. The program provides academic and vocational skills training in a structured, disciplined military environment. During a 22-week residential phase, students attend classes, get training in personal finance, health, nutrition, citizenship, and participate in military-style adventure-based training.

Following the residential phase, students are paired with a local

adult volunteer mentor who will work with the student for a year to help keep him or her focused on goals. The ChalleNGe Program also provides each graduate with a \$2200.00 stipend which can be used for further academic or vocational training, or to assist the individual in gaining employment.

"So far, the ChalleNGe Program in Alaska has completed three classes and graduated more than 130 young men and women," said Col. John Fleming, program director. "Each one successfully met the challenges of what we

believe is the toughest program for young adults in the state,"

A significant number of the graduates have continued their academic or vocational training. Some have returned to high school to complete diploma programs and others have gone to work.

"We are proud of our graduates," said Fleming. "Many arrived here as teenagers with little direction in their lives, or had dropped out of school. Some had been involved with drugs or had problems with the law. They worked hard to be successful in

the program and are now being successful in life."

To support the recruiting effort for the future ChalleNGe Program classes, a public service announcement featuring Alaska State President Drue Pearce is being released this week. Pearce volunteered for the production, which includes footage of her jumping from the Army Airborne training tower on Fort Richardson.

For more information about the program, please contact Staff Sgt. Ed Wicher at 384-6015/6017, or 800-797-2267.