

Even in wartime, West Point pulls them in

By Harry Levins

POST-DISPATCH SENIOR WRITER

Saturday, Jul. 21 2007

Military academy news for golfers: A charity tourney will be held Aug. 21 at Norwood Country Club to benefit Toys for Tots and the USO. The sponsor: the St. Louis Military Academies Sports Foundation. The contact: Kevin Kaveney, at 314-746-2862.

Military academy news for everybody else: Despite the unhappy reports out of Iraq and Afghanistan, the St. Louis area just shipped a record number of first-year cadets off to West Point.

That's the word from Frank Janoski of Webster Groves, a lawyer and a 1974 West Point grad.

Janoski works with other members of the West Point Society of Greater St. Louis to talk up the academy in eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois.

You'd think that the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan would steer youngsters away. But Janoski says: "Here in the Midwest, it hasn't. This month, Missouri and the Metro East had 44 young men and women enter West Point — the greatest number ever."

Still, Janoski concedes that recruiting can be what soldiers call "a challenge." For one thing, few parents these days have had any military experience. They tend to think of West Point as a military post, not as a college campus.

To counter that, Janoski and his fellow alums encourage the parents to visit West Point with their teenagers. "Usually, they come back and say, 'I had no idea,'" Janoski says.

The lesson: Although West Pointers spend their summers soldiering; they spend the rest of the year studying literature, languages, science and all the rest.

The bonus: "This premier education is valued at \$250,000" — and it's free.

Janoski and his fellow alums also stress West Point's lessons in leadership, an art that's taught at few campuses.

He says the leadership lessons are especially valuable for West Point's women — like his daughter Amelia, a third-year cadet.

"A young woman who has learned how to live in a man's world and has had leadership roles is very sought-after when her time in the Army is up," Janoski says.

OK, but what about those wars? How do Janoski and his fellow alums answer parental fears for their children's lives?

"We tell parents, 'If you could predict what the world will be like five years from now, we could tell you the risk to your son or daughter when they graduate. But very few cadets who start their first year in a war graduate four years later into the same war.'" (He concedes that this year's graduates are among those few.)

Janoski's group wants to hear from interested teens in the high school classes of '08 and '09. They can reach him at fjanoski@lewisrice.com.

Oh — among Janoski's classmates, and still among his friends, is the U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus. Yes, Janoski knows Petraeus' West Point nickname.

But sorry: It's a military secret.

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/columnists.nsf/militarymatters/story/E4402283639468F98625731F00134FC?OpenDocument>