

24 Kern youths graduate from Devil Pups program

BY DICK TAYLOR

Contributing writer

Preparing young men and women for what life will bring them may seem like a valuable goal for a summer camp, but it takes on a new meaning when it is instilled by sweat and screaming Marine Corps officers.

That's exactly what happened for 300 teenagers from California, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton last week. The 10-day program ended with a

graduation and awards ceremony Saturday.

The Devil Pups Youth Program for America was created in 1954. U.S. Marines were referred to as "Devil Dogs" in World War I by enemy troops for their battlefield accomplishments and "never give up" spirit. The Devil Pups name is derived from this heritage.

The program builds self-confidence, discipline, teamwork and respect for others. Under the watchful eyes and encour-

agement of Marine noncommissioned officers, camp participants do beach runs up to five miles, tower jumps into a swimming pool and a formidable hike up "Ole Smokey," a foreboding mountain overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Marine Sgt. Douglas A. Hawks, a Devil Pup platoon commander, said, "It's not just building our youth, it's building our country. If you have squared-away citizens, you're going to have a squared-away country."

Twenty-four graduates of this year's program were selected from Kern County: Joseph Armijo, Arthur Bermudez, Jordan Finch, Tyler Hayes, Daniel Hernandez, Rene Hernandez, Michael Machado, Brandon McClay, William Mosley, Denzil Nutall, Christian Peterson, Charles Porter, Aaron Ramirez, Wesley Ruments, Alejandra Tarango, Mitchell Taylor, Felix Trevino, Emilio Valdez, Warren Williams, Shanisha Wandick,

Please see **PUPS / B3**

PUPS: Kern teens receive honors

CONTINUED FROM B1

Ali Willingham, Tommy Willingham, Charles Wise and Matthew Wright.

At graduation, three teens from Kern County were honored for their accomplishments. Armijo and Trevino were recognized for scoring in the top 5 percent of physical fitness scores; Ali Willingham was selected as the female platoon Honor Graduate; and Armijo was presented the Robert Petersen Award for demonstrating extraordinary leadership skills.

For information on how to apply, visit the Devil Pups Web site at devilpups.com.

Dick Taylor is a former Marine and serves as a liaison representative for the Devil Pups Program in Kern County. Reach him at devilpupsbakfield@hotmail.com.



DICK TAYLOR / SPECIAL TO THE CALIFORNIAN

Three teenagers from Bakersfield, and a new friend, show off their medals after reaching the top of Ole Smokey, a dusty hike up a steep mountain, the culmination of a week of physical and mental challenges in the Devil Pups summer program at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton on Aug. 8. From left to right: Shanisha Wandick, (unknown), Alejandra Tarango and Ali Willingham.