

Minority

From Page 20

Social Organization of Schools, half of black students attend 2,000 high schools where 40 percent of the entering freshmen don't graduate.

Half of all black high school students don't graduate from high school. In 2005, 824,775 white students took the SAT, compared to 153,132 blacks. Furthermore, half the black men who take the test and get into college drop out their freshman year.

But Mair, who said she grew up in inner-city Albany, N.Y., said the problems disappeared for her and her peers after they got into West Point.

"It's so focused on teamwork and performance here," she said. "Culture, race — that goes out the window. You just see a person."

Convincing candidates

ROTC programs face different problems, Kotakis said, because there are more reasons for students to fall out of programs or never get involved in the first place.

This is important because more than 60 percent of black and Hispanic students attend high-poverty schools, compared to 30 percent



HOLLEY MEISTER

West Point cadet Marjana Mair said "it's so focused on teamwork and performance" at the school and that culture and race are not factors.

of Asians and 18 percent of whites, according to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.

And 43 percent of black students come from single-parent homes, which often means those students need part-time jobs or scholarships to go to college.

"In ROTC, they have to be a full-time student," Kotakis said.

Cadet recruiters also have to convince sought-after students to commit to six years in the Army after they graduate, take a lower paycheck than they might earn in the business world and, especially since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, put their lives on the

line, Jones said.

"If an African-American scores a 1,200 [on the SAT], every school and company in the country wants that kid," Jones said. "But students aren't getting shot at with GM."

That doesn't even begin to touch upon the cultural issues that could be at work in black communities.

"Where I come from, you don't want to go in the Army," explained West Point spokeswoman Maj. Shelly Jackson, who is black. "You're working for the man. There is still some of that out there, so part of it is getting over some myths."

For her, a strong mentoring program was key when she made the switch to Officer Candidate School after six years as an enlisted soldier. "I'm a first-generation college graduate, so I couldn't ask my mom and dad." And, she said, she didn't always feel comfortable asking students who didn't look like her. She related better when black officers took her under their wings.

Since the mid-1990s, West Point has sent 40 to 50 percent of its black cadet candidates to prep school to improve their SAT scores, meet physical requirements and spend time with mentors. Potential students also come up for long weekends with

black faculty and staff members, and the admissions department has begun reaching out as early as students' freshman year of high school to let them know what they need to do to attend West Point.

In 1996, West Point cadets and faculty formed the Association of Graduates Diversity Leadership committee, which strives to keep the academy's black population at 8 percent to 12 percent. To do that, committee members hope to coach students to do well on the SAT, ask alumni to reach out as mentors, use success stories of other students to sell the school to minorities and help students prepare for the physical fitness requirement.

At Cadet Command, recruiters have begun working with The Rocks, a mentoring organization for black officers, and 100 Black Men, a leadership and mentoring organization for blacks.

Kotakis said Cadet Command and West Point have joined forces to try to work the problem out together. And Jones said the cadets who are coming in believe in what they're doing.

"Those who come are coming for the right reasons," Jones said. "They are turning down good offers — good fully funded offers. They're going in with their eyes wide open and they understand what it's all about." □

Training center makes its way to Fort Stewart

The 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team at Fort Stewart, Ga., is so close to deploying, its soldiers don't have time to travel to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

So the experts are coming to them.

It is an unusual mission for the NTC. The last — and until now, the only — time the center's personnel traveled to train soldiers was in January 2005, when they visited Fort Carson, Colo.

"We're basically transporting the NTC to Fort Stewart and they'll be getting everything they would get here except for the environment," NTC spokesman John Wagstaffe said.

The first of Fort Irwin's contingent of 1,300 soldiers, staff members and contracted Arabic linguists and role players had already headed east as of Sept. 15 for the two-week home station mission rehearsal exercise set to begin Sept. 25.

— Gina Cavallaro

A★F★C

ARMED FORCES CONNECTION

ARMED FORCES CONNECTION
VETERAN FRIENDLY SEAL

Retiring or Separating?

FIND YOUR DREAM JOB

FREE Online Services Include

- ★ Job Board
- ★ Resume Consultation
- ★ Transition Counselors
- ★ Relocation Assistance

Register Online to WIN an Xbox 360!

www.armedforcesconnection.com
HELPING THOSE WHO DEFEND US™
1 - 8 7 7 - 2 3 2 - 5 0 2 7

15% OFF Mil-Thin™ Ribbons

Plus FREE Devices!

- FREE Devices. • Super light weight.
- Magnets, short or long prongs.
- Fast Service.
- Reduced shipping cost on web orders.
- Easy to use ribbon rack builder on web.

www.Mil-Thin.com

and build your ribbon rack. See it before you order it! Get fast service, free devices and great quality.

Use
MT6S
code for
discount

or

Call **1-800-605-3008**

Fax **1-800-407-8640**

(Mention this ad for reduced shipping)

Hurry, Offer Expires 30 Oct 06

www.Mil-Thin.com

TEACH

EDUCATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Support the NPA Foundation through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC# 1390).

The NPA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more information, visit www.npa.org.

For more information, visit www.npa.org.

Thank you for your generous support!

www.npa.org
11552AvenueL
Lynchburg, VA 24502
800-368-3636

The NPA Foundation
11552AvenueL, Lynchburg, VA 24502
800-368-3636

CFC# 1390