

Five Council Rock North seniors honored for military commitment

By Chris English Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, June 2, 2015 1:45 pm



From left Haily Burns, Devon Collins, Nicholas Gallina and Grant Thorburn are congratulated by Council Rock High School North principal Susan McCarthy during a ceremony Tuesday, June 2, 2015 to honor seniors going into the U S military.

Their backgrounds and motivations vary, but the five Council Rock High School North seniors recognized Tuesday morning share a strong bond.

They are all willing to commit several years of their lives to the United States military.

Honored during a brief ceremony and breakfast reception at the Newtown Township school were Nick Gallina, Devon Collins, Grant Thorburn, Hailey Burns and Avery Bonwell.

Avery, who couldn't attend Tuesday morning's event, will enter the U.S. Army soon after Council Rock North's June 17 graduation, said assistant principal Alan Gamble.

The other four will attend college either before or at the same time as their military service.

Hailey, a Newtown Township resident, said she has received a presidential and congressional appointment to attend the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, on a full four-year scholarship. She follows in the footsteps of her father, Michael, a Navy veteran and 1990 Naval Academy graduate.

She said she plans to major in some form of engineering at Annapolis, and afterward will enter the Navy as an ensign for an initial five-year commitment.

"We're a big military family," she said. "I also have several uncles who have served. I remember going to Army-Navy football games almost since I was a baby and watching men and women marching around in uniform. I think that, and the influence of my dad and other relatives, really inspired me to want to serve my country."

Devon, also of Newtown Township, will attend Penn State University and major in nursing on a full Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship. After college, she has an eight-year commitment to the Army, but said she wants to make military service her career.

"I believe the military is an elite enclave of individuals, and I believe I have the strength and sense of commitment to accept that challenge and join that group," she said.

Grant, a Newtown Township resident, will attend the University of Miami on a full ROTC scholarship and major in international business. After college, his Army obligation is four years of active duty and four years in the Reserves.

"I'm an Eagle Scout, so that's kind of pre-military," said Grant. "I like the regimented lifestyle, and the honor and discipline that comes along with it. I have a few friends in the military, and in talking with them and considering a lot of other things, I think this is a good choice for me."

After college, Devon and Grant will both enter the Army as second lieutenants.

Nick, of Wrightstown, said he'll start his part-time service in the Army National Guard soon after entering West Chester University to major in criminal justice. He said he

someday wants to be a police officer, and military service goes along with the other passions in his life.

"I like to help people," Nick said. "I'm a volunteer firefighter with the Newtown and Lingohocken fire companies. Military service is just something I've always felt I wanted to do — a patriotic service."

Gamble said he admires all five students.

"At their age, to have the desire to dedicate several years to the military and serving their country is a wonderful thing," he said.