

By [Kelci Nicodemus](#)

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Photo courtesy of the Okotoks Sea Cadets. High River and area have welcomed a new cadet program. Youth aged 12 to 18 are encourage to sign up and attend meetings every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

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High River and its surrounding area has started a sea cadet corps to be hosted out of the Masonic Hall here in the community.

Operating under the current name Okotoks Sea Cadets, the corps is open to youth ages 12 to 18.

This is a great opportunity for any youth throughout the Foothills, said Lieutenant Linda Wellwood, commanding officer for the Okotoks Sea Cadets.

“It is a youth program and they learn all about leadership, seamanship, rope work, drills (and) construction techniques,” she said. “There are different phases that they go through (during) their cadet career to advance and gain abilities.”

The sea cadets focus on areas such as promoting leadership, teamwork and good citizenship as well as physical fitness.

The program is also in place to stimulate an interest in the activities of the Canadian Forces.

“Lieutenant (Tim) Thompson and I came out to Okotoks and High River in the summer and he asked me why there was not a sea cadet corps in Okotoks (and area),” Wellwood said. As a result, the duo decided to start one.

Lieutenant Tim Thompson, area cadet officer, said there are many benefits to joining the sea cadet program. He added the program is free to join and uniforms are provided.

“It’s an opportunity to have your youth go into a positive environment where they are going to be well taken care of by trained adults,” he said.

Through the program, youth who are involved will have the chance to go sailing on Lake Chestermere at least once a year in the spring, Thompson noted. Cadets will also have the option to travel to different training sites across the country throughout the summer.

“One of the options would be a seamanship program where they will learn to sail,” he said. “Or they get to go on an orca which is 33 metres (or) 110 feet long. They actually become the crew of that and they do everything (including) learning the navigation of the ship.”

He noted there is also a ceremonial aspect and several other routes that are available throughout their cadet career.

“It’s a challenging program where the youth get to steer their own cadet career in what they want to do,” he said. “If they want to go on international exchanges, those options are there and it’s not going to cost anything for them to do it; if they want to go on tall ships, the options there; If they want to go on power vessels, they can do that.”

Wellwood and Thompson encouraged youth interested to stop by the Masonic Hall in High River to give the program a try.

“There is something in the program for everyone. It’s finding that niche that the individual likes to do and wants to do,” Thompson said. “There is flexibility because we know that youth are already involved in (sports), which takes up a lot of time...We will work with the parents and with the cadets to provide them with additional options.

Wellwood, who also went through the cadet program, said the cadets encouraged her to be a better person.

“You learn to structure, how to develop yourself into a strong person and you learn leadership skills,” she said.

The Okotoks Sea Cadets meet every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at the Masonic Hall in High River. For more information on the sea cadet program visit www.cadet.ca or call 403-464-1562.

Residents can also visit the Okotoks SeaCadets Facebook page.