

Mt. Olive High School Starts J.R.O.T.C.

By Henry M. Holden

About three years ago the Mt. Olive School District reached out to the Air Force to inquire about starting a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). Because of Mt. Olive High School's focus on robotics, and engineering the Air Force felt it would be a perfect fit.

In September, the program began under the leadership of Chief Master Sgt. Robert Bedell, a decorated airman, who, before his retirement in September oversaw 1,750 enlisted men and women as the Command Chief for the 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base, the west coast space hub, delivering payloads into orbit and testing aircraft.

A member of the Air Force for 29 years, Bedell has been awarded many commendations for excellence and service. He brings to MOHS years of experience mentoring young adults, and his technical background in rocketry and space flight. He provides students with unique real world knowledge of aerospace science, one of the core components of the Air Force JROTC program.

JROTC is offered to all students, in grades nine through 12, as an elective in the normal rotation of courses in the stu-

dent's schedules.

"Participating students are in no way committed to, or obligated to serve in the military after graduation," said Bedell.

Officials estimate between 30 to 50 percent of JROTC cadets nationwide choose to either enlist, attend one of the military academies, or join a college ROTC.

Students who wish to participate in the class must fully understand the dress code, uniform requirements, and have room for it in their schedules.

"We initially started out with 81 students, but a few could not work it into their schedules and there were also the issues of a haircut, and wearing the uniform once a week," said Bedell.

"JROTC develops leadership, self-confidence, self-discipline, character, and teaches military history and customs," said Bedell. "Physical fitness training and drill instruction is an important part of the program.

"The program has a unique advantage for students thinking of joining the Air Force after they graduate," said Bedell. "If they complete two years of JROTC, and join the Air Force, they are awarded after their basic training the rank of E-2, a rank that usually takes 12

continued on page 36



Cadet in foreground is Michael Buzzelli, behind him is Nashawn Vazquez
Photo by Kristen Luettchau

J.R.O.T.C...

continued from page 22
months to earn. If they complete three years, they will earn the rank of E-3, a rank that usually takes 16 months to earn.

"We'll be setting up a Color Guard in order to present the colors at school and community events," Bedell said, "We also hope to put together a Drill Team that would compete at future competitions against other JROTC units. In the future, I plan on starting up a Rocketry Team and Stellar Ex-

plorer Teams, which provides additional opportunities for the cadets to be involved and compete against other schools."

Students who are interested in taking the JROTC class next year should request the class when they complete their schedule requests for the 2018-2019 school year this winter.

Bedell reminds students, "As with any elective, students will need to balance their academic requirements with their desire to take this class."

Have You Thought Of Going Back To Church Lately ?

W/ * C/ 1