

Levin on Hand for the Events

ALPENA - The Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center had two ribbon-cutting ceremonies on Friday - one to commemorate new troop quarters and another for the opening of STARBASE, a Department of Defense youth program for hands-on learning.

Col. Bryan Teff, commander of the CRTC, said the new troop quarters program originally was \$8.9 million, but the design cost was \$709,000 and the construction of the new housing quarters construction contract was awarded to Mead & Hunt for \$7 million on Aug. 24, 2010.



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The project was completed under budget, and consists of 31,000 square feet for a new troop quarters facility, and includes 8,000 square feet of civil engineering storage at the CRTC. The new troop quarters replace six substandard troop quarters buildings and will accommodate 159 personnel.

"This is the top-of-the-line training facility for airmen in our country, and we want to keep it that way," Sen. Carl Levin said during the troop quarters ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Teff said the project is the first of four planned phases of new troop quarter facilities. Overall, the project involved 10 building contractors and employed over 200 construction workers.

After the tour of the troop quarters, the STARBASE building was recognized as a Department of Defense community outreach program that will open Monday, offering fifth and sixth grade students hands-on curriculum that emphasizes math, science, engineering and technology.

"The program will be used to respond to the needs of children, by offering alternative,

stimulating, hands-on activities that are beyond the scope of traditional classrooms," Deputy Director Sarah Prevo said.

According to Prevo, as a military installation, Alpena's STARBASE will have exclusive high-tech resources that will provide opportunities for students to build robots, launch model rockets, design computer models on CAD software, and print designs on 3-D printers.

Levin said there are 76 STARBASE's in 34 states. The program originally started when two people tried to connect military bases to children in order to give children opportunities for new learning experiences.

"I want to thank our educators for being great role models and teaching. We are deeply indebted to the educational community. This is a way to get kids excited; if you've done that then you've won the battle of education. If you can open a mind, you can make education real," Levin said.

Prevo said she will be focusing on making learning fun and inspiring at STARBASE and thanked Levin and Washington legislators for supporting the program and signing law language that funds it.

The CRTC received funding to host the STARBASE program in the fall of 2011. It occupies 4,225 square feet in space and includes a learning center and computer lab. The doors will be open for students on Monday and will accommodate classrooms of 36 students and eventually reach more than 800 local area students per year.

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