

# HIGH DESERT

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## SURPRISE LANDING

### Coast Guard shows up at Academy for Academic Excellence

BY LYNNEA LOMBARDO ~ STAFF WRITER

**APPLE VALLEY** • Jaws dropped and students high-fived when they heard the news: A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter would land any minute on the baseball field of their school, the Academy for Academic Excellence.

Hearing the sound of chopping blades, roughly 40 students rushed out to a large patch of grass on the north side of the campus as the big orange aircraft gently set down.

“You don’t see the Coast Guard flying into Apple Valley every day,” laughed Kay Ardenski, local outreach supervisor for the Lewis Center for Educational Research.

The students who witnessed the helicopter land are part of the Aerospace Excellence in Education Program, an after-school workshop for middle and high school students that is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Laura Unferdorfer, outreach volunteer coordinator for the Lewis Center, said the curriculum for the monthly workshop is organized by the Civil Air Patrol.

“What’s really cool about having them come out and land is that the students are asking the pilots questions, they’re talking to them and interacting with them,” Unferdorfer said. “And that’s how they’re going to learn the most.”

This is the second year that the Coast Guard has visited the Lewis Center.

Previous years’ visits have included aircraft from the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and the California Highway Patrol.

Tony Marshall, one of the program’s volunteer instructors, said he has worked with a commander in the Coast Guard and used his contacts to facilitate Thursday’s surprise visit.

“I just asked them,” Marshall said. “It’s as simple as asking.”

Freshman Shane Denison, a former participant in the Aerospace Excellence in Education Program, said every time he watches a helicopter land or take off, it’s always amazing.

“I heard that helicopters are on the border of physics,” Denison said. “How they fly, it’s not really supposed to happen but it does anyway. It’s incredible.”

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**KENNETH SOUSA, SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS**

**EXPLORING OPTIONS:** A student from the Lewis Center for Educational Research sits in the pilot's seat of a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter that landed at the Academy for Academic Excellence. The landing was part of the Lewis Center's effort to show students the number of different career options they can choose from, with the focus on education.



**KENNETH SOUSA, SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS**

**LEARNING ABOUT CAREERS:** The U.S. Coast Guard landed one of its orange helicopters at the Academy for Academic Excellence on Thursday afternoon as part of the Lewis Center's Aerospace Excellence in Education

Program, an after-school workshop for middle- and high-school students that is staffed entirely by volunteers. *Used with permission by Freedom Communications, 2013*