

#### WEST POINT SOCIETY OF NAPLES WINTER 2025

# SOCIETY NEWS

Serving Graduates throughout
Southwest Florida

Welcome!

### **Upcoming Events**

# Annual Meeting & Luncheon

When: Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>

Time: 11:30 AM

Place: Grey Oaks Country

Club, Naples Speaker:

GEN (R) Keith Alexander

### Save the Dates!

#### **Future Events**

- Jan 25<sup>th</sup> West Point Parents Club Bowling Night
- Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 13th
   Annual SWFL All
   Service Academy Golf
   Event
- Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> –Southwest Florida Military Appreciation Day w/ Army West Point Lacrosse
- March 14<sup>th</sup> –
   Founders Day
- April Spring Luncheon

Dear Members and Friends –

Welcome to our spring edition! We're delighted to share highlights of our recent accomplishments and preview the engaging events planned for the season ahead. Join us as we continue building meaningful connections and making a positive impact in our community.

### Honoring the Legacy: West Point Founders Day in Southwest Florida

Each spring, West Point Societies worldwide come together to honor the founding of the United States Military Academy with the time-honored tradition of Founders Day. For almost 40 years, the graduates in Southwest Florida have proudly hosted and participated in this celebration, gathering graduates, cadets, cadet candidates, and their families to celebrate West Point's legacy and the powerful connections that bind generations of the Long Gray Line.

President Thomas Jefferson established West Point in March 1802 as a formal institution dedicated to developing leaders of character and military prowess. The first official Founders Day celebration took place on March 16, 1902, marking the Academy's centennial with a dinner to honor those who had served and sacrificed in defense of the nation. As early as 1916, Founders Day events were taking place simultaneously in cities like New York, San Francisco,

Chicago, Boston, and Honolulu, enabling graduates to make phone calls connecting old grads from city to city. Some of these early gatherings were elaborate, with hundreds in attendance, menus inspired by mess hall fare, and even

Continued on Page 2



#### Honoring the Legacy: West Point Founders Day in Southwest Florida

miniature sally ports set up for decoration. Meanwhile, smaller groups celebrated just as meaningfully in living rooms and community spaces, coming together to honor their alma mater. Since then, Founders Day has become a yearly tradition, celebrated with events around the world to reaffirm the Academy's core values: Duty, Honor, and Country.

Today, societies host a variety of Founders Day events that reflect the diversity of the West Point community. Many still hold formal dinners, while others opt for brunches, picnics, spirit events, and even virtual gatherings, allowing graduates to stay connected regardless of distance, duty, or deployment. The spirit of Founders Day is rooted in celebrating West Point and remembering those who have sacrificed in service to the nation, while also embracing the future and the generations of cadets who will continue this proud legacy.



WPSN Founders Day at Gray Oaks, 2024

The West Point Society of Naples has carried this tradition forward with vibrant celebrations that allow our community to connect and commemorate the Academy's lasting impact. Our annual Founders Day celebration is more than a social event—it's a chance to reflect on West Point's legacy, to honor the past, and to inspire the future. Each year, cadet candidates and their families join us, bringing fresh energy and commitment to the gathering. These young men and women preparing to embark on their West Point journey meet and learn from graduates who carry on the Academy's traditions in both military and civilian careers. For graduates and cadets, it's a time to reflect on their experiences and to renew bonds with others who share the same values.

As we prepare for this year's Founders Day celebration, we are honored to carry on this cherished tradition in Southwest Florida. We look forward to gathering once again to celebrate West Point's history, to inspire future leaders, and to strengthen the ties that make our society and our Academy so unique. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Founders Day events over the years, and to all who will join us in making this year's celebration truly memorable.

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Members and Friends,

It's often said that behind every great organization are the people who make it thrive. I'm continually inspired by the passion, dedication, and camaraderie of this community. Whether you've volunteered, attended events, or donated to our initiatives, your efforts have made a real difference.



Because of your generosity, we've been able to sponsor JROTC programs, mentor future cadets, support our current cadets, host events like Founders Day, and strengthen the bonds of the Long Gray Line here in Southwest Florida. Thank you for the gifts of your time, talent, and treasure—it's your support that allows us to carry forward the values of Duty, Honor, and Country in meaningful ways.

As we look ahead, I encourage you to stay involved. Bring a guest to an event, share your expertise, or consider a financial contribution to help us support even more cadet candidates and community programs. Together, we can continue to grow, inspire future leaders, and uphold the proud traditions of West Point.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and personally thanking you for your invaluable contributions.

Go Army!

Chris Williams,'87
President, West Point Society of Naples

- Sponsor JROTC Awards
- Sponsor a Cadet Candidate to attend the Summer Leadership Experience (SLE)
- Sponsor a Cadet Boodle Run
- Sponsor a Cadet and/or Cadet Candidates/parents attending Founders Day

- Represent WPSN at an award ceremony or an event
- Visit a local High School
- Attend our events
- Bring a guest to an event
- Sponsor a guest speaker
- Donate money, stocks or bonds
- Become an active member!

To make a tax-deductible Donation: <a href="https://westpointsocietyofnaples.com/make-a-donation/">https://westpointsocietyofnaples.com/make-a-donation/</a>

To join/renew active membership: <a href="https://westpointsocietyofnaples.com/joinrenew">https://westpointsocietyofnaples.com/joinrenew</a>





# UPCOMING EVENTS

### ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

DATE: Thursday, January 23, 2025 @ 11:30am LOCATION: Grey Oaks Country Club, Naples

AGENDA: Meet/Greet; Annual Update;

Election of Board of Directors; Lunch; Speaker

GUEST SPEAKER: GEN (R) Keith Alexander,

Distinguished Graduate, Class of 1974; Longest

serving Director of the National Security

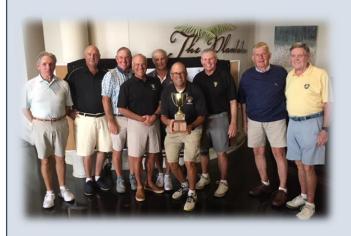
Agency; First Commander of US Cyber

Command



**R.s.v.p.** will be through the WPSN Website: Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Join us this month for our annual meeting and luncheon with guest speaker GEN (R) Keith Alexander as he shares his Army experiences.



## Our mission: Defend the Commander's Cup!

# 13th Annual SWFL All Service Academy Golf Event

DATE: Wednesday, February 12th, 2025

TIME: Shotgun Start at 1315 hours (1:15 pm).

LOCATION: Bonita Bay Club, Sabal Course, 3700 Wildwood Blvd., Naples, FL 35120 (5 miles east of

I-75 on North Side of Immokolee Road.)

COST: \$243.00 for Non-Members, \$103.04 for

Bonita Bay Club Golf Members.

CONTACT: If you are interested in participating, contact Evan Blanco at Evan.Blanco@sbcglobal.net

Army is the defending Commander's Cup Champion with a decisive victory over Navy and Air Force by a score of 615 to 635 (Navy) and 643 (Air Force). Army was led by Jack Oulette '67 with a low Gross score of 73 and Trevor Swartz '95 with a low Net score of 75. Army's Team consisted of Jodie Glore '69, Mike Kostoff '79, Mike Conway '64, Mike Zolidis '70, Pete Lilly '70, Don Albers '67, John Leone '68, Bruce Korda '68, Gregg Boron '74, and Evan Blanco '80.

The Army Team is ready to bring their A-Game to this year's event.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Come out and support the Army West Point Lacrosse Team as they take on Mercer here in southwest Florida!



DATE: Saturday,
February 22nd,
2025, @ 12:00 PM
LOCATION: Paradise
Coast Sports
Complex in Naples.

#### Go ARMY!

You can all support the team with a Southwest Florida Shootout Partnership

# Guest Speaker: COL John Baskerville Professor & Department Head Department of English and World Languages



**R.s.v.p.** will be through the WPSN Website:

Founders Day

### FOUNDERS DAY



- AGENDA: Benny Havens/Dinner/Program
- DATE: March 14, 2025 @ 6PM
- DRESS: Black Tie Optional, Business Suit, Miniature Medals Optional Cocktail Attire for Ladies
- LOCATION: Grey Oaks Country Club



### FALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### **Fall Luncheon**

### **Historic Rivalry Luncheon Event**

A special presentation on one of college football's most storied rivalries was held at The Landings Yacht, Golf, and Tennis Club in Fort Myers at our fall luncheon. West Point graduate Richard Cacioppe (Class of 1962) served as the featured speaker, sharing insights into the historic Army-Notre Dame rivalry, with particular focus on the legendary 1946 "Game of the Century."



The event brought together a diverse audience including local JROTC representatives, West Point graduates and their families, Notre Dame alumni, and parents from our West Point Parents Club. The venue choice of The Landings Yacht, Golf, and Tennis Club provided an elegant setting for this celebration of Army football history and tradition.

#### Army wins again!



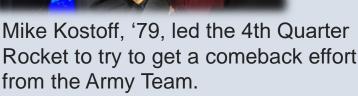
### FALL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### **Army Navy Watch Party**

Over 60 alumni, Parents Club, family and friends showed up to cheer on Army during the 2024 Annual Army - Navy football game in Naples, Florida.



Rod Vitty, '55, led us in singing God Bless America and was also the Oldest Grad.













Adam Lewis, '98, was the Youngest Grad in attendance.



A great time was had by all, even though we sang second. The Falisi Family, owners of The Hangout By Two Guys, were wonderful hosts again this year. They are from the Hudson River Valley and big Army fans.

# SUPPORTING CADETS

### West Point Parents Club of Southwest Florida



#### The results are in! Branch Night for the Class of 2025

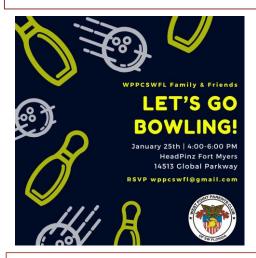
Kelli Ahlquist – Armor Imani Christian – Aviation Austin Henning – Field Artillery Liam Holston – Infantry Jack Laterra – Engineers Isaac Lewis – Air Defense Artillery Anthony Tinerella – Infantry Samantha Vest – Medical Service Corps Katherine Ward – Medical Service Corps

# Congrats to our SWFL Firsties









#### **Bowling night**

The Parents Club is hosting a bowling night — Parents Club members check you email for details — others who are interested, please reach out for more details.



For more information about the Parents Club, follow us on Facebook or contact Patty Holston pattymholston@ gmail.com

https://www.facebook.com/wppcswfl

#### Thank you to all our Secret Santas

We are so grateful to our Parents Club and WPSN for the monetary donations and for all the wishlist items that were purchased for our adopted family. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide the children with ten gifts each and Mom Sarah with a few gifts as well. We also provided the family with \$365 in gift cards from Outback, Target, and Visa. Mom Sarah sent a message later that evening and asked us to share with you: "I want to wholeheartedly thank all of you! The kids and I are so overwhelmed and so appreciative for the gifts. God is good! Please give our love and thanks to the entire West Point Parents Club of Southwest Florida family." Sarah and the kids had to leave their home and move in with family as they start their lives over. Thank you for going on this journey with us and bringing joy to a local family who desperately needed it.

# MEET A SWFL CADET

Kelli L. Ahlquist

Class of 2025 Company B-2

Academic Major: Human Geography with a minor in Middle East Area Studies

Kelli Ahlquist is a 2020 graduate from North Fort Myers High School. During her senior year in high school, Kelli was the Lee County JROTC Area Commander, the senior cadet in an 8,000 cadet program. In 2019, she received Congressional nominations for both the United States Military Academy and the United States Air Force Academy. Although not directly



admitted, Kelli entered the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) following high school graduation and with a subsequent appointment, entered West Point in 2021 with the Class of 2025.

Kelli was active in company intramural sports, participating in Sandhurst as a Plebe. In her upper class years, she did Grappling (Combatives) in the fall and Ultimate Frisbie in the spring. She achieved the Army's Combatives Level 1 & 2 certifications which will enable her to be a Combatives Level 1 Trainer in her units.

Following Plebe Year, having studied Arabic, Kelli participated in the Advanced Individual Academic Development (AIAD) to Morocco. Between Yearling and Cow Year, she did a Strategic Policy AIAD to Poland and Israel.

For Yearling Year, Kelli was a Team Leader, directly responsible for a Plebe in the company with the additional challenge of the Plebe being an athlete and frequently absent from company activities. For her summer leadership detail, she was a Platoon Sergeant for cadet candidate training at the Prep School. She was the Battalion Sandhurst Sergeant Major and a Brigade AS3 (Taskings NCO) during the Cow academic year. For first detail Firstie Year, Kelli served on the Cadet Brigade Staff as Assistant S3 (Future Operations) and next detail, she will be a Platoon Leader back in the company.

During Projects Day, Kelli will present her thesis within the Geography and Environmental Engineering Department on the wartime damage to Aleppo, Syria using imaginary and data bases.

After Cadet Field Training (Camp Buckner following Plebe Year), Kelli was convinced she wanted to be an Armor Officer. Her CTLT this past summer was with the 1st Squadron, 6th Calvary Regiment in the 1st Armored Division at Fort Bliss, Texas. She received her first choice, branching Armor.

# MEET A SWFL CADET

### Imani K. Christian

Class of 2025 Company F-1

Academic Major: Electrical Engineering

Imani Christian is a 2020 graduate from Armwood High School in Seffner, Florida. Following High School, she entered the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) and with a subsequent appointment, entered West Point in 2021 with the Class of 2025.



Throughout her cadet career, Imani was never bashful about trying different opportunities. As a Plebe, she was on the Fencing Team. Then, as a Yearling, she was on the Female Boxing Team. Later, as a Cow, Imani was one of the Managers for the Women's Lacrosse Team.

Between her Yearling and Cow year, she participated in a French-sponsored Advanced Individual Academic Development (AIAD) to the United Kingdom. The focus of the excursion was to learn more about NATO organization. Last summer, Imani attended the Army Space Cadre Basic Course AIAD (Advanced Individual Academic Development) where she achieved the 3Y "Space Enabler" Skill Identifier.

During Cow summer, Imani was a Beast Squad Leader and served as a squad leader during both academic semesters of her Cow year. Currently, she is a Platoon Leader in Company F-1 (Go Firehouse!). Always inquisitive and not afraid to ask probing questions, Imani always tries to learn more about the profession and what she can do to become a better leader.

Imani's CTLT this past summer was with the 1st Armored Division, 6th Calvary Regiment, 3rd Squadron Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas. She even had the opportunity to overwatch multiple AH-64D transfers and briefed the Squadron Commander on a CONOP she developed for an Apache reconnaissance mission while there!

Next semester, Imani hopes to serve as the next Spiritivities Officer, executing cohesive events and raising moral within Company. She finds the most enjoyment in bringing together the unit and providing an outlet to connect outside of West Point's rigorous schedules.

On Branch Night, Imani was honored to receive Aviation, embarking on a journey into the skies with endless opportunities ahead. This moment marks the beginning of an incredible future in an elite and dynamic branch, leading fellow aviators in the skies. Fly Army!

# MEET A SWFL CADET

Liam T. Holston
Class of 2025
Company I-1

Academic Major: Defense Strategic Studies

Liam Holston is a 2021 graduate from Fort Myers High School in Fort Myers, FL. He received an appointment to the United States Military Academy, entering that summer with the Class of 2025.



Between his Yearling and Cow year, Liam attended Air Assault School, earning the Army's Air Assault Badge.

Other than academics, Liam participated in Sandhurst and company intramurals, especially ultimate frisbee.

During Cow summer, Liam was a Squad Leader on the cadre for the Academy's Summer Leader Experience with potential candidates who are between their high school junior and senior year. He was recognized as the top squad leader out of 40 during his Summer Leader Experience detail. Liam was a Squad Leader and Platoon Sergeant within the Company during the first detail Cow Year, and the Company First Sergeant during the second detail. Currently, he is the Company Store Officer and Special Projects Officer. Next detail, Liam will be the Company S-1.

Liam is doing research on chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and traumatic brain injuries (TMI). He had the opportunity to experience the new developmental combat helmet while on CTLT.

His CTLT this past summer was with 2-505 Infantry in the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg). He received his first choice of branch in Infantry and looks forward to getting started after commissioning.



# FIELD FORCE UPDATE

### **Supporting Cadet Candidates**



#### SWFL Field Force: Building Future West Point Classes - A Year-Round Mission

The Class of 2029 (high school seniors) have until January 31, 2025, to complete their West Point applications. In turn, the field force is shifting focus to the Class of 2030 as high school juniors prepare for their application window to the Summer Leader Experience and West Point which opens on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This seems like a good time to highlight the activities involved with supporting cadet candidates through the application process.

### **Our Two-Step Process:**

#### **Step 1: Outreach and Information**

#### We actively identify potential candidates:

- College fairs at schools
- JROTC event support
- Collaboration with high school counselors
- Congressional District Academy Days
- Admissions Information Briefings













FL19 Mock Interviews: '91 Russ Schott. Cindy Dreyfuss (Merchant Marine Academy), Bill Faris (USAFA), USAFA grad, John Evans (USNA parent).

# FIELD FORCE UPDATE

#### **Step 2: Comprehensive Mentorship**

We guide candidates through multiple phases:

#### **Beginning the Application Process:**

- Regular information meetings
- Application completion guidance
- Resume building assistance
- Application review sessions

#### **During Application Process:**

- Networking events with current cadets during hometown visits
- Mock interview preparation for Congressional interviews
- Cadet Question and Answer Luncheons (like those held during Thanksgiving cadet hometown visits)

#### **Post-Acceptance Support:**

- Founders Day Candidate Social
- Recognition ceremonies
- Continued mentorship through the transition to and during cadet years





(above) '68 Marty Bowling, with 45 cadets currently at West Point, continuing to mentor his candidates. (below)

Thanksgiving candidate Q and A luncheon



Class of '29 and '30 candidates engage in a candidate Q and A luncheon with Cadets '26 Wilson Sutter, '27 Raphael Fabyanic, and '27 Galen Crusan.



**Get Involved!** We welcome volunteers who want to support these activities and events. If you're interested in contributing to the development of future West Point leaders, please reach out to us via email.

# FIELD FORCE TIMELIN

www.westpoint.edu/admissions

Field Force Activities in Bold

Fall, Junior Yr.

Admissions Briefing (Aug)

- College Fairs (Sept)
- Mentor Juniors and Below
- Congressional Academy Days



Spring, Junior Yr.

- Admissions Briefing (Jan/Feb)
- Candidates Open Candidate Questionnaire and Apply to Summer Leader Experience (SLE) (15 Feb)
- College Fairs (March)
- Candidate Informational Meetings/Mentorship Begins
- Main West Point Application Opens (15 Feb)

Summer

- SLE (if accepted) (Jun)
- Field Force Interviews Begin
- Congressional Nomination Applications Begin
- AIM Briefings (Aug)
- College Fairs (Sept)
- Complete West Point Application (Goal Oct Nov!)
- Congressional Nomination Applications Due (Sep Nov)
- Mock Interviews (Sep Oct)
- Congressional Interviews (Oct Dec)
- Mentorship/Monitor Candidate Progress
- Nominations Announced (Dec Jan)

Spring, Senior Yr.

Fall, Senior Yr.

- Mentorship/Monitor File Status (Deadline Jan 31!)
- USMA Offers (as early as Nov!)
- Candidates Officially Accept (NLT 1 May)
- Accepted Candidate Founder's Day Social (Mar)
- Candidate Recognition at High Schools (Apr May)

**High School** Graduation!

- Cadet Candidate Boot Camp (May)
- Cadet Candidates report to Beast! (Jun)





### DID YOU KNOW?

#### West Point's Term End Evolution: A Tale of Two Eras

West Point has seen significant changes in how it structures its academic year and term-end activities, reflecting broader shifts in both military education and collegiate athletics. A comparison between the 1970s and today reveals fascinating differences in how cadets navigate their end-of-

semester experiences.

#### The 1970s: Yesteryear: Tradition and Timing

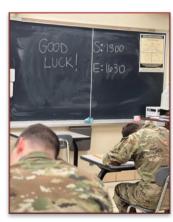
The rhythm of cadet life followed a more traditional beat. The Army-Navy game, that storied rivalry, was consistently held on the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Despite the football team's prowess, Army was not allowed to play in the 1967 Sugar Bowl because the Secretary of the Army believed that post season bowl games would take away from the Academy's primary mission.

The academic structure was notably different as well. Cadets operated under a three-detail system, changing duties and roommates thrice yearly. The class of 1968 was the first Plebe class to get Christmas leave. Christmas break served merely as a holiday respite, not a semester boundary, and finals loomed two weeks after returning from the break. The scheduling of exams was relatively straightforward, as most cadets followed nearly identical course loads, with limited electives that easily fit around core requirements.

### #BeatTheDean



#TEEWeek





Spinning the spurs for good luck!



#### 2025: Today: Flexibility and Complexity

Modern West Point academics presents a more complex picture. The Army-Navy game now occurs on the second Saturday in December, and bowl game opportunities can occur before as well as during the Christmas break.

Term End Exams (TEEs) immediately follow the Army-Navy game, marking the conclusion of the first semester's leadership and duty detail. The academy has streamlined to a two-detail system. Cadets must clear their rooms before departing for Christmas break and prepare for new assignments upon their return.

Perhaps the most striking change is the complexity of exam scheduling. While some cadets might complete their finals by Friday and start their break, others might find themselves taking exams as late as Saturday night or even Sunday morning. This variability reflects the modern academy's more diverse course offerings and individualized academic paths.

The Impact of Change Whether in the 1970s or today, one thing remains constant: West Point continues to evolve while preparing future Army officers for the challenges that await them after graduation. The changes in term-end procedures reflect the academy's ongoing commitment to providing the best possible education and leadership training for tomorrow's military leaders.



# AOG SUPPORT

#### AOG is looking for local representatives to support their initiatives!

### Volunteer Veterans Services Liaisons (VVSL)

The Veterans Volunteer Services Liaison (VVSL) is a newly created position within Societies and Classes, designed for individuals working in Veterans Services careers or those familiar with the Veterans Services or VA Benefits process. The VVSL's responsibilities include helping Society members or classmates navigate Veterans Services, providing information and guidance on available resources, and maintaining confidentiality and respect for privacy. The role requires attending monthly training webinars (30-60 minutes) and offering assistance on a case-by-case basis. This position is essential for leveraging the skills and passion of graduates with Veterans Services experience to support fellow grads locally or within their class. To sign up, visit the Veterans Services page in Sallyport and complete the VVSL Memorandum of Understanding.

### Memorial Support Programs

The purpose of Survivors Community
Outreach is to **connect** the community of
Surviving Spouses and Next of Kin who are
intrinsically linked through the loss of a
loved one and their love of West Point. To
present opportunities through
programming, communication and support
resources to connect with each other and to
remain connected to West Point and the
Long Gray Line.



**Building a Survivors Community on Sallyport** 

### **Grads Helping Grads Programs**

Looking to be more involved in local activities?

### JOIN THE TEAM!

We are always looking for volunteers – from hosting local Benny Haven's to working with the Field Force team and representing WPSN at events!

If you're ready to take a more active role in our Society and help shape our future, we encourage you to apply! Please contact Chris Williams at

<u>admin@westpointsocietyofnaples.com</u> for more information.

### Serving Graduates throughout Southwest Florida

#### **Meet your WPSN Board of Directors**

President -

Chris Williams '87 Arnie Haake '69 Doug Whitehead '85

Vice President/Events – Mike Zolidis '70 Russ Schott '91

Evan Blanco '80 Gary Speer '72 Libby Schott '91

Secretary – Garrett Dietz '73 Derek DeVecchis '13

Cathy Speer '72 Spouse Mike Kostoff '79 Patty Holston '25 Parent

Treasurer – Emeritus

Matt Shanahan '99

Jodie Glore '69

Pete Lilly '70

#### Membership Info

Your dues and donations help support the many activities sponsored by the WPSN. The rates for active membership:

- Annual \$35
- Three-year \$100
- Lifetime \$400



Celebrate lifelong friendships



The membership year runs from July 1st to June 30th.

### **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the West Point Society of Naples, an exclusively non-profit organization, is to: (1) further the principles and welfare of the United States Military Academy;

- (2) provide an organization with activities for its members to associate in order to foster the aims, ideals, standards and achievements of the United States Military Academy:
- (3) promote a better understanding of the Military Academy by the public throughout Southwest Florida; and
- (4) inform, encourage and assist talented young men and women of the admissions process of the Military Academy.



We are based in Naples, but our membership area covers all of Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties.

West Point Society of Naples is a 501 (c)(3) / tax exempt organization

**West Point Society of Naples** 



#### LINKS

<u>United Stated Military</u> <u>Academy</u>

**West Point AOG** 

SallyPort

**USMA Alumni Info** 

**GoArmy Sports** 

