

Southern University NROTC Hosts Physical Competition in honor of Fallen Alumnus

(BATON ROUGE, LA) - The Southern University Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps conducted the 9th Annual Dronet Challenge on Saturday, September 26th 2015 in honor of fallen alumnus, 1st Lieutenant Brandon Dronet, USMC.

Brandon Dronet graduated from Louisiana State University and earned a commission in the United States Marine Corps through the Southern University NROTC program in May 2002. On February 17th, 2006, 1st Lt. Dronet was among eight marines and two airmen who tragically perished in a helicopter crash in the Gulf of Aden in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In his memory, each year a physical competition is hosted by the Southern University NROTC Midshipman Battalion. This year, teams representing Southern University Naval ROTC, Southern University Army ROTC, University of Louisiana-Lafayette Army ROTC, Tulane University Naval ROTC, Louisiana State University Army ROTC, and Louisiana State University Air Force ROTC participated in a spirited competition. The ten person co-ed teams competed for high scores in push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, a timed water jug relay, a timed poncho carry, Marine Corps Combat Fitness Test, tug-of-war, and a team run on Southern University's endurance course. When the final scores were tabulated, LSU Army ROTC took first place, LSU Air Force ROTC finished second, and the host team came in third.

More than just a competition, the Dronet Challenge gives cadets and midshipmen a chance to come together for a common cause and develop their professional competency through physical competition. "One of the best parts of the Dronet Challenge is getting to interact with so many different units, all of whom give us a new way of seeing how we could be growing as future leaders," said Midshipman Second Class Ashley Owens, one of the event coordinators.

At the closing ceremony, Southern University NROTC Professor of Naval Science, Captain Anthony Chatham, presented a wreath in honor of 1st Lt. Dronet and spoke about the importance of continued traditions that honor our fallen brothers and sisters in arms, stating that these events become "bigger than any one man" and allow us to reflect upon and honor those that made the ultimate sacrifice. The event concluded with the playing of taps which served as the day's final reminder that heroes like 1st Lt. Dronet may be gone, but to those whose lives they touched, they are never forgotten.