Naval Academy Class of 2028 reunites with family after 6 weeks of intensive training

The remnants of Tropical Depression Debby drizzled off and on as families congregated on the U.S. Naval Academy's campus, jostling for a view of the Class of 2028.

After a rigorous six-week program that prepares first-year students, also known as plebes, for their next four years at the academy, the students were reunited with their families on Friday for the first time since Induction Day on June 27, when the plebes arrived at the Naval Academy.

"I think I've grown to understand what the purpose is here," said Brody Brunner, a plebe from Baltimore who has been working toward attending the Naval Academy since middle school. "I always had an idea, but you never really get it until you step through those doors after raising your hand and go through a couple of weeks of harsh training."

The plebes marched out of Bancroft Hall with their companies, and their commanders drilled them on “Reef Points,” a 225-page introduction to the academy they memorized over the summer, while parents tried to spot their sons or daughters in the 1,200-person class, all in white Navy uniforms.

Molly Treseler, a fourth-year midshipman who hopes to join the Marine Corps, is one of the company commanders who trained the plebes. Each detailer is a third or fourth-year Naval Academy student, responsible for 65 plebes.

"I have a really enthusiastic group," said Treseler. "It's been really cool to watch them grow."

When a company commander bellowed "fall out," the plebes dropped their professional, military demeanors and ran to their families. They climbed on the bleachers and brick walls, scanning the crowd for their loved ones.

Izabel Ramos, a plebe from San Diego, was proud to be reunited with her dad, who is also in the Navy and wore his uniform.

"For us to be in whites together is really special," said Ramos. "I'm really proud of my sense of unity and teamwork this summer."

Over the six weeks, the plebes lost access to their phones and most of their possessions. Additionally, they had no access to TV, movies, the internet, or music. Aside from letters and the two phone calls they were permitted for the entire summer, they had no contact with their families.

Phillip Pagtakhan reunited with his daughter. Pagtakhan is in the Marines, and his wife recently retired from the Marines. It's the first time he has been apart from his daughter and he is very proud of her.

"It's cool because she's understanding the things we were trying to impart on her, and now, while she was going through this whole process, she wrote letters and talked to us on the phone about how it's all come full circle," said Pagtakhan.

After reuniting with their families, the plebes were free to show them the campus, teach them about their new lives as midshipmen, and meet with Naval Academy faculty and staff. Tomorrow, families will watch a dress parade before leaving their plebe to complete their training and start the academic year.