

Local students cherish Girls State experience

Written by Eva L. Penzing and Brenda Hernandez

Girls State was an adventure before it even started. All we had heard was that Girls State was a ton of fun and an amazing learning experience. The Holyoke American Legion Auxiliary Unit was able to send two delegates; neither of us had any idea how to get to Gunnison so we decided to take a bus.

Check in and registration commenced at 8 a.m. Sunday, June 9. Therefore, we decided to arrive the day before since it was a six-hour ride.

Our Girls State journey started off by us waking up at 4 in the morning to catch a ride to Denver. From there we waited three hours for our bus. Neither of us had done this on our own before so it was a step out of our comfort zone.

One of the drivers would randomly scream “alpacas!” which suited him fine, we believe, for the very reason he chewed his gum just like one.

We arrived at Western State College, only to find there was no one around to greet us and show us to our rooms. So we wandered around aimlessly for about 45 minutes, then decided to give the director a call. She had to send a staff member to find us and register us. After that we settled down and anxiously awaited the next day.

Since we had checked in the night before, we had all morning to relax and meet our roommates. Each city was named after a Colorado wild flower. Brenda was assigned to the city of Western Wallflower, and Eva was assigned to the city of Mexican Hat. The rest of the day was a lot of sit and get. We met our director, 2012 governor, counselors and junior counselors.

An interesting keynote speaker was Miss Colorado Teen USA. She spoke of bullying because she was conflicted with it throughout high school. We also were able to put together city, choir and editor meetings.

Every day of the week was dedicated to educate us on an aspect that affects teenage girls in

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today's society. Sunday was suicide prevention day. That day we were encouraged to celebrate life and make positive life choices.

Monday was the first full day of activities as well as the day of bullying awareness. It included the first general assembly, the first city assembly, the first county assembly, the first legislative session and an open forum. Open forum was an activity that was widely enjoyed by everyone. It consisted of delegates expressing their views and opinions on worldwide issues.

Tuesday celebrated health day. We spent three hours doing volunteer work; we chose to clean an American Auxiliary Legion hut. Through our volunteer experience, we had the opportunity to learn the history of the hut.

Later that day we took part in a mock whistle stop, where the delegates were able to ask the girls running for governor, Lt. governor, U.S. senator and US representative questions. A flag ceremony was held to inform us of proper flag etiquette and to increase our patriotism. We were each presented with a flag of our own to take home with us.

Wednesday was more of an interactive day. We watched a talent show which included delegates performing acts ranging from poetry, jump roping, singing and dancing. An ice cream social was also held that evening to have some lay back time after 15-hour days packed full of government education.

That day was also end violence against women day. In order to celebrate relationships, we watched a short video and had several delegates share their point of view on this issue.

Thursday consisted of the usual assemblies and legislative sessions that were held daily. Since Girls State annually holds their conference at Western State College, we partook in a traditional tree planting ceremony to give back to the community.

Thursday was inauguration night where we inducted our governor, presented the Samsung scholarship recipient and presented the Girls Nation senators and alternates. We were able to dress up and wear our prom dresses that night which was fun! Friday was the last day, and we

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had a joint judicial legislative session, a candle ceremony and the closing session.

Girls State was a learning experience full of arts and crafts, appreciation for our veterans, patriotism and governmental ways and issues. We learned the ways of the government through writing, debating and passing bills. We ran for a few positions and won positions such as a docket clerk, a judge for elections and many others.

The days started at 7 a.m. and ended around 10:30 p.m., yet it was super fun and a memorable learning experience that we will cherish forever. Many thanks to Holyoke's American Legion Auxiliary Unit 90 for giving us the opportunity to carry with us the joys and privileges of being a Girls State delegate.

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