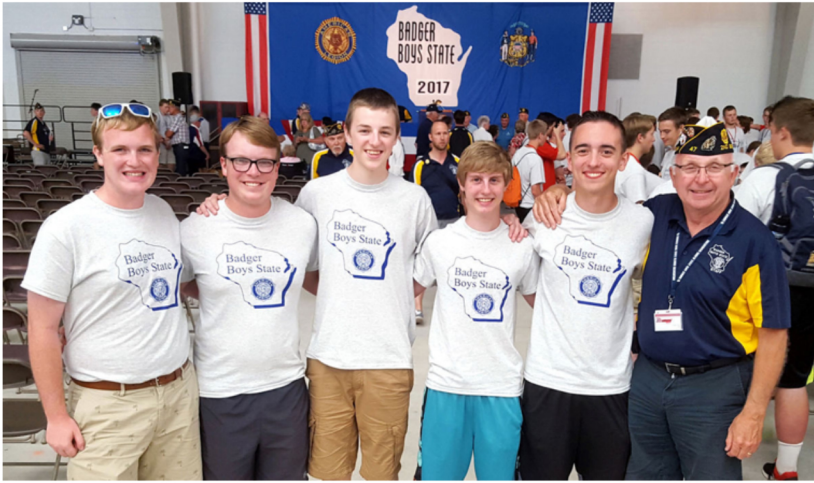


Badger Boys State fosters teamwork, brotherhood for Portage students

NOAH VERNAU nvernoau@wiscnews.com Jul 1, 2017



Five Portage High School boys attended 2017 Badger Boys State at Ripon College from June 10 to 17. Pictured, from left, are Tyler Wood, Dalton Brauner, Cade Harkner, Codey Neises, Aaron Jacobson and Norm Bednarek, American Legion Post 47 Adjutant.

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Contributed by Norm Bednarek

Portage High School junior Dalton Brauner packed his bags for an eight-day trip to Ripon College without knowing what to expect.

Badger Boys State, held from June 10-17, brought 885 soon-to-be seniors to the campus. Brauner was one of five Portage students to go — the others being Tyler Wood, Cade Harkner, Codey Neises and Aaron Jacobson — but not long after he arrived, they were split up.

“We were all scrambled,” he said.

Cities formed in the dormitory floors — Brauner’s being the city of “Rusk.” Brauner decided to run for city attorney, which he won. He and his peers later elected county and state officials, but “those are pretty competitive” so Brauner was satisfied with being city attorney.

As city attorney, he handled cases set up by the counselors and — “this might sound silly,” he said — but his big case was when 15 horses (made of foam) had escaped a corral, a disaster the city of Rusk was blamed for.

The case was a bit “one-sided,” Brauner said, as the other side “had an actual attorney” in charge of their case. “It was a setup,” he added with a laugh. Rusk lost, but he did his best defending it. He and his mates argued that it was an unfair trial — and it was — “because we had a listing of times that each city was supposed to watch the corral, and that was not posted before the time of escape.”

Winning wasn’t the point, however.

“I thought it was really cool to see a bunch of younger men work all together as a team,” Brauner said. “You don’t see that a lot today; I thought it was a really nice experience, to know it’s not hard to work as a team if you all have the same goal and same mindset.”

‘Tremendous experience’

American Legion Post 47 Adjutant Norm Bednarek went to Badger Boys State for the seventh straight year. His organization is one of the event’s sponsors, along with Knights of Columbus, The Computer Clinic and former Portage Mayor Bill Tierney.

Badger Boys State, Bednarek said, gives students a “tremendous experience” on how government is run, but more than that, it helps them build “great leadership skills.”

“The boys come there the first day quite scared and frightened,” said Bednarek, and he would know, since he does the orientations for parents and students. “They know they’re going,” he added, “but they won’t have the feel of what it’s like for a day or two, when they’re experiencing what it’s really like.”

Dawn Brauner, Dalton’s mother, is the program’s coordinator for the Wisconsin American Legion, which is headquartered in Portage. She attended Badger Boys State for registration and some setup work. Last year she was involved in some of the event organizing, and “there’s quite a bit of behind-the-scene work that takes place” there, she noted.

“I think it’s a really amazing program for the boys to attend,” Dawn Brauner said. “They’re learning about government from all different levels, but at same time they’re learning about the importance of their

involvement as a citizen, and learning about themselves as young men.”

Importance of teamwork

Dalton Brauner was “really surprised” at how much “emotion” was put into the trip, by every student. The level of teamwork he saw in Ripon inspired him, to the point where he’s staying in touch with about 20 students from across Wisconsin.

“We have some group chats going (online),” he said. He’s planning to attend University of Wisconsin-Madison after graduating high school, and a couple of his new friends are considering UW-Madison, too. “They might be roommates down the road.”

Why is teamwork surprising?

“I think in today’s society it’s kind of every man for himself,” Brauner said, “and it’s really hard to find a lot of people who want the same thing and are willing to make certain sacrifices to get there.”

“I think what I’ll take from it,” he continued, “is no matter what background you come from — who your parents are, what your name is, I don’t think that should be looked upon as your character. It’s the certain type of work ethic that you put into everything (that defines you). You should view people as they are, rather than who you think they are at first.”

Brauner, who works for Zimmerman Plumbing, wants to get a degree in mechanical engineering. “I really liked cars, and that got me into engines, and I owe a lot of it to my auto tech teacher at PHS – Dustan Garrigan.” Garrigan helped Brauner develop his passion for engines, “and it kind of took off from there.”

For a career, he wants to work for Ford or Harley-Davidson in their police inspector divisions. He’d be designing either engines or different parts of the car “to make it easier for law enforcement officers to basically do their whole job, make it safe.”

How might Badger Boys State impact his future?

“It’s quite the experience to build friendships,” he said, “and to feel like brothers.”

Follow Noah Vernau on Twitter @NoahVernau

Local teens attend Boys State

Wednesday, July 26, 2017



JOHNSTON — These six Spencer teens recently attended the weeklong 78th session of American Legion Hawkeye Boys State program at Camp Dodge in Johnston. These delegates joined over 450 of some of the finest young men in Iowa, and were sponsored by The American Legion, The American Legion Riders and the VFW. Pictured are Sam Alberts, Trey Sievers, Austin Crew, John Feldmann and Tyler Coulander. Missing from the picture is Tim Steele. Also pictured is Hawkeye Boys State Director Jack St Peters, and a Boys State counselor Steve Crew. Boys State is considered the number one Civic Education program in America and some 20,000 boys attend nationally in their respective states. The purpose of Boys State is to help develop a better understanding of state, county and city government with participation and personal experience in a model state, county and city government. It also includes training in practical citizenship, leadership and character development through a nonpartisan perspective. (Photo submitted)

Edmond's Goodrich serves as governor at Boys State

Jun 19, 2017



Oklahoma Boys State Governor Connor Goodrich of Edmond is pictured with Governor Mary Fallin.
photo provided

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Miami, Okla. — Oklahoma American Legion Boys State was held on the campus of Northeastern Oklahoma A&M University May 27-June 3, 2017 under the direction of Clay A. Ballenger. An Edmond high school student was elected to a major leadership role at the non-partisan intensive week of leadership, government and patriotism.

The delegates elected Connor Goodrich of Edmond as their governor and Max Jackson of Ponca City as lieutenant governor.

Director Ballenger said the 78th session of Oklahoma American Legion Boys State included 430 delegates and 70 staff members attending as speakers and staff shared their love of country and the concept of devotion to duty with the delegates.

Oklahoma remains one of only a few Boys States in the nation to offer three hours of college credit for the completion of Boys State. Director Ballenger said the Boys State education program is second to none with excellent instruction, meaningful tests over material, and a Practicum where the delegates put into practice what they have learned in the classroom.

The delegates heard from a variety of speakers including Governor Mary Fallin, Retired Rear Admiral Doug McClain (Blue Angels Pilot), Oklahoma City Mayor and gubernatorial candidate Mick Cornett, and former Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Turpen.

Boys State has a Fire Academy as well as a Police Academy. The Miami Fire Department ran the fire academy. The National Guard provided instruction on homeland defense. The Oklahoma Highway Patrol assisted with the police academy and brought in their helicopter for the delegates to see.

Delegates who did not attend one of the special schools served in legislatures where they introduced and debated legislation, some of which could be forwarded to the Oklahoma State Legislature. Others served as judges, district attorneys, and various state cabinet positions.

James Limbaugh of Sallisaw and Michael Albright of Stillwater were selected to represent Oklahoma at Boys Nation in Washington D.C. later this summer. The selection process began with a nomination by a staff member followed by an interview by a panel of American Legion members. The nominees were narrowed down to four in the interview process then those four participated in a "Boys State wide" election to select the two U.S. Senators from Oklahoma. Limbaugh and Albright were elected by their peers.

Boys Nation will be July 21-29 on the campus of Marymount University in Virginia. The 98 Senators representing every state in the union except Hawaii, will participate in mock Senate sessions, hear guest speakers, lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers, tour Washington D.C., and visit the Capitol Building among many other events.

The boys also competed daily in a wide variety of sports. The delegates were divided into 12 "cities" and by the end of the week, one was named the "City of Excellence" based on academics, sports, behavior and other factors.

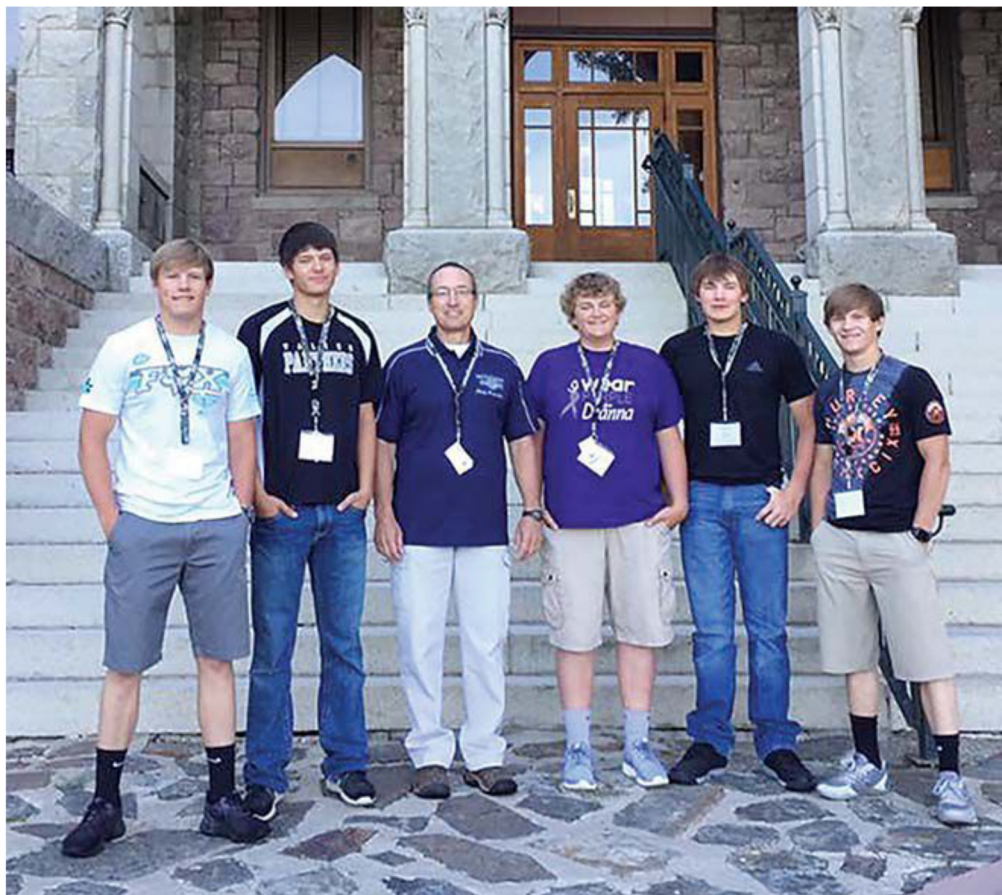
According to Ballenger, the 2017 session of Oklahoma American Legion Boys State was one of the best ever.

"We have an outstanding staff of volunteers who give a week of their vacations to serve," Ballenger said. "Without them, Boys State would not be possible and we appreciate them so much. Boys State is called the Week that Shapes a Lifetime and this year's session was no exception."

Oklahoma American Legion Boys State is a non-partisan intensive week of leadership, government, and patriotism sponsored by the American Legion of Oklahoma. Delegates to Boys State have just completed their junior year of high school and have been selected by their local American Legion Post as a representative of the best of their community.

Boys State was eye-opening experience for five students

By Brandon Kavanagh The Valerian Jul 19, 2017



Trever VandenBos, Koltin Christiaens, Lane McAlpine, Zach Stoltz and Tanner VandenBos represented Valier High School at the 2017 American Legion Boys State convention in Helena earlier this summer. Their advisor, VHS teacher Fred Trafelet, has been involved with the program for over 30 years and serves as a chief counselor during the week-long event, which is held on the campus of Carroll College.

Five Valier seniors-to-be recently returned home from Helena after attending the annual American Legion Boys State educational program June 4-9 on the campus of Carroll College.

Trever VandenBos, Koltin Christiaens, Lane McAlpine, Tanner VandenBos and Zach Stoltz all had different individual experiences at the conference but all were in agreement the week was not only very informative but also a new, fun experience and something they would encourage their younger classmates to participate in.

High school juniors from around the state apply with their local American Legion for the opportunity to attend each year.

“I wanted to learn more about the history of Montana and how the government works,” said Christiaens when asked why he applied. “I also wanted to get to know what the American Legion was because I had many family members that have been involved with the American Legion.”

The American Legion Boys State is one of the most respected and selective educational programs of government instruction offered to high school students. Each participant becomes part of the operation of his local city, county and state government. Currently there are 49 Boys State programs nationally; only Hawaii does not conduct a program.

“I decided to apply to Boys State mainly because one of my teachers Mr. Trafelet, convinced me to go,” said Trever VandenBos. “He told me what Boys State was all about and after that I and a few of my friends all wanted to go.”

Local teacher Fred Trafelet has been involved as the Chief Counselor at Boys State for 31 years and the five VHS students represent the largest group that has attended Boys State from Valier. Trafelet said that the American Legion Post #40 and the Valier Volunteer Fire Department sponsored all five boys so they could attend Boys State this year.

“I was always really interested in how the government process worked and I thought Boys State would be a great way to learn about it,” said McAlpine. “Past members from Valier said they had really enjoyed it so I wanted to see what it was all about.”

Trafelet said that the “hands on” experience in government is something that can’t be taught in a classroom. Over 130 delegates from around the state attended Boys State this year and were divided into 6 “cities” on their first day. The cities were split into two counties and the counties had representatives within the state government. Delegates were also divided into the Pioneer and Frontier political parties.

From there students are elected to various offices within their township’s government up to the state level.

Trever VandenBos was elected to city council and also served as a member of the House of Representatives for the week. Stoltz was also elected to the city council.

“We voted on different laws and passed them for the good of our city,” said Stoltz. “I enjoyed having the opportunity to shape our city.”

Tanner VandenBos was elected as a city commissioner and was also voted as a senator for the Pioneer Party.

“I liked sitting in the actual senate and voting,” he said. “It opened my eyes to what the real senators actually do.”

McAlpine spent the week as the Lieutenant Governor’s Secretary.

“It was really fun because wherever he went, I went,” he said. “I didn’t have to run in an election, he just asked me to do it with him.”

Christiaens wasn’t elected to an office but spent the week on the police staff.

"I wasn't lucky enough to be elected but was still able to learn how the election process works," he said.

"The boys all gained practical experience," said Trafelet. "From local, to county and State levels of government it is a hands on experience. They elected Mayors, council members, passed ordinances, held court proceedings. Whether they were council members or elected as the Superintendent of Public Instruction, they carried out those responsibilities."

While much of the week revolved around city council, county and senate meetings, the boys still had plenty of time to meet kids from across the state and enjoy some free time.

Flag football and ultimate frisbee were among the favorites of the Panther boys, the opportunity to make new friends from kids they wouldn't have otherwise met was a definite plus to the experience. Each of the five boys highlighted making new friends as among their favorite parts of the experience.

"The best part of the trip for me was meeting new friends in my city, Granite," said Tanner VandenBos. "At first, I was nervous and wanted to keep to myself but once I started meeting other kids I felt a lot more comfortable."

"Meeting lots of people and gaining new friendships was the best part," said McAlpine. "There were tons of boys from all across Montana and that was really cool to meet all of them."

Not all of the week was spent on the Carroll College campus. Being in the State's capital allowed for some off campus trips that made the trip all the more authentic.

"The best part of the trip was when we had the chance to spend the day in the capitol building," said Stoltz. "Each branch of government got to use the actual rooms that the legislature uses."

While much of the focus of the week is on government, there is also a focus on leadership throughout the week. The connections made at Boys State can also lead to lifelong friendships or sometimes can pique ones interest enough to pursue a career in government. Just ask Ryan Zinke who is currently serving as the United States Secretary of the Interior; or Montana Governor Steve Bullock, Lieutenant Governor Mike Cooney, Senator Steve Daines and many others who got their start in Montana government at Boys State.

While it remains to be seen where this experience will take the five boys from Valier, each of them had their own unique takeaways from the week and would encourage anyone with the opportunity to apply.

"The biggest thing I got out of this is that you have to step out of your comfort zone and get involved if you actually want to have fun and be successful in what you're doing," said Tanner VandenBos. "I feel like that applies to everyday life. You can't just live in a box and expect to meet people and be successful. You have to get out and think outside of the box."

"The biggest thing I took away was that there are a lot of very intelligent kids out there," said Trevor VandenBos. "I also learned that before I judge someone's opinion on a topic I should listen to everything they have to say."

"I learned that the government field wasn't for me!" said McAlpine. "I learned a lot, but definitely isn't what I want to become in my future."

"I would recommend applying for Boys State to next year's juniors because it was a lot of fun and I learned a lot about our government," said Stoltz. "Overall, it was a really good experience."

“I would tell next year’s juniors to go because it is a great opportunity to learn and see how the government works,” said Christiaens.

“I would definitely recommend that people go,” said Trever VandenBos. “It’s a great experience! The friends you make and the memories that are made are something that I will never forget.”

Vernal boys attend Utah Boys State

Courtesy Reed Rasmussen Jun 27, 2017



Boys State President, Bob Jones, Counselor Doug Case, Students Tanner Woodruff, Tyler Gilroy, Jared Spencer, Briggs Newton, Josh Shipton, counselors Reed Rasmussen, Johanna Jenkins, Michael Perez, Broc Nerdin, Justin Bjerknes, Jason Dansie. Not pictured is Zack Pemberton.

Courtesy Reed Rasmussen

American Legion Utah Boys State was held June 12-16 at Weber State campus. Boys State is a week long forum in citizenship, self-government and public service. Boys State is a place to learn and observe how government is conducted through hands-on mock participation.

Eleven Vernal area boys representing the Terra Academy and Uintah High School, joined 232 high school juniors from across the state. Fifty-seven volunteer veterans and nine law enforcement and fire service officers worked to conduct the program and ensure a successful event.

Twenty-six guest speakers including Governor Gary Herbert, provided substantive and meaningful insight into our system of government, current topics and the challenges of the future.

181 scholarships valued at \$1,450,600 were presented at the graduation ceremony. Three scholarships were awarded by the Utah Boys State Foundation to boys that otherwise would not be able to pursue higher education.

On behalf of the Vernal boys that attended the class of 2017, the members American Legion Post 11 would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the businesses, private citizens and parents for their monetary donations that helped send the boys to Boys State. A special thanks to Mrs. Limb and Mrs. Evans, the two counselors that worked so tirelessly to promote the program and help the boys register. Support for youth programs could not be possible without the financial help from the community.

If you would like to sponsor a boy or help in sending next year's boys, the cost is \$375 per boy, however, no donation is too small.

If you would like to help the most disadvantaged, but deserving, please consider donating to the Utah Boys State Foundation. Checks will gladly be accepted at American Legion Post 11, PO Box 24, Vernal, please indicate where you would like the funds to be used, local boys state participants or the foundation. A receipt will be provided by return mail.