

BOYS' STATE OPENS WITH ORIENTATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

Circuit Court Judge John Maddux, in his 31st year as Boys' State Board of Directors chairman, opened the orientation and memorial service on Sunday evening by telling the audience that the week of sacrificing time, energy and attention would be worth the experience. Perry Roberts, vice chairman of ALBS' Board of Directors, placed POW-MIA flag. Tennessee American Legion State Commander Don E. Mathis, representing more than 30,000 Tennessee American Legion members, placed the memorial wreath and welcomed delegates.

Charles McCaskey, retired Army chaplain and minister of Cookeville's First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, told delegates that 1.5 million individuals have died in defense of this country since its inception, including 4,000 in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Freedom isn't free; you have to pay the price; you have to sacrifice for your liberty." He charged them with moving beyond the common activities of Memorial Day to remember the real meaning of the day. "Don't be selfish; you remember somebody paid the price for you to be here. On Memorial Day, you pause and give thanks. This is our cause."

Cookeville Mayor Sam Sallee, a delegate 22 years ago, said after Sept. 11, 2001, it became clear to him what really mattered for his family, community and country. "I knew I could serve my community and my country right here at home."

Tennessee Tech University Provost Jack Armistead welcomed everyone to campus. 2009 Boys' State Gov. Harlin Miller led this year's delegate in taking the Boys' State pledge.

Judge Maddux informed the audience that Tennessee's Boys' State program is considered the best of the 55 programs in the world. For the fourth consecutive year, CPR/AED training will be offered to each participant. Streaming video will allow parents and friends to watch assembly speakers and parade ground activities on the Boys' State website.

REMEMBER ME?

Judge John Maddux offered a well-received presentation on "Remembering Names and Faces." Boys' Staters learned the importance of remembering names in order to influence, communicate, impress, sell and create and maintain friendships. He challenged delegates to learn every person's name in their cities by noon on Wednesday.

Judge Maddux gave five steps and an acronym (INRAW) for remembering a person's name:

1. Be Interested
2. Get the Name (listen, ask about spelling and origin)
3. Repeat the Name (aloud, silently several times)
4. Associate Mental Image with Name (recall features, be silly)
5. Write it down (carry a notepad)

BOYS' STATERS BECOME MEMBERS OF WHO'S WHO — Upon completion of Boys' State, the American Legion will automatically submit your name to the list of Who's Who Among American High School Students.

STATE REP. HENRY FINCHER LEADS LESSON IN POLITICAL DEBATE, ADDRESSES MAJOR STATE POLITICAL ISSUES

State Rep. Henry Fincher fired up delegates in the main assembly on Monday morning with a lesson on reasoned debate and discussions on hot political topics in Tennessee. Fincher, who graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Harvard Law School, is a practicing attorney. He represents House District 42 and focuses on funding education, fighting illegal immigration and creating state jobs.

Fincher began by telling delegates how to communicate effectively about political issues. "First, listen. You'll learn your audience, learn the issues and you won't say something stupid. Second, know your audience. If they don't care about what you have to say or you don't have the right topic, they won't listen. Third, know what you want to say. You'd be amazed at how many people can't put it into words."

Fincher emphasized that understanding politics is vital, because politics occurs in corporate settings as well as in government. "Some of you want to distinguish yourselves; some of you have ambition. That's why it's important to know how to participate effectively."

"Before you speak, organize your thoughts. You can control your emotions. Don't lose the fire and passion, just learn to focus it or it makes a mess. Pick your words carefully, if you get in a hurry and pick the wrong word, you and your argument will be less effective. And be reasonable. It sounds odd, but if you utterly deny the other point of view, you look unreasonable. Stick to your strong points and admit points of the other argument that are valid."

Then Fincher launched a session allowing participants to experience how political debate works in state government, using a "Harvard-style" format of adversarial conversation. Fincher asked volunteers to present differing opinions on two topics currently being debated on Capitol Hill: abortion and gun laws. He gave background on the current status of two bills being presented dealing with these issues.

He explained Tennessee's SJR-127, a proposal to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2014 that would state "no constitutional protection" for abortion. He explained that advocates use a 2000 court decision to say that our state constitution has more expansive rights than the federal constitution on the topic. He then opened the floor for debate.

He also presented the current hot topic in gun legislation: what advocates call "restaurant carry" and what critics call "guns in bars."

He continuously stressed to Boys' Staters the decorum and self-control needed to debate and persuade in the political arena.

"When you are debating in an assembly, you have to make valid arguments logically, calmly and in order," Fincher said. "Don't make it personal. Orderly debate is the key to being heard. You may shout somebody down and shut them up, but you won't convince them."

"You don't try to pitch a shutout in a debate," he explained. "Each side scores points with a valid argument. And there is a place for conceding reasonably and eloquently."

Fincher concluded by reminding the audience the need to understand the reality of the American process of government. "No one branch of government can really tell the other what to do 100 percent of the time. No matter how important the issue or public good, if you can't get levels of government to agree, there will have to be compromise."

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