

TENNESSEE AMERICAN LEGION

BOYS STATE

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GOV. BILL HASLAM, STATE SUPREME COURT TO VISIT BOYS' STATE AT TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY

AMERICAN LEGION HOSTS 49th BOYS' STATE AT TTU MAY 26-JUNE 1

The number one American Legion Boys' State program in the nation will begin its 49th year at Tennessee Tech University this Memorial Day weekend.

The program ranks as the best in the country because of the opportunities given to about 600 high school juniors from across the state. During the week they will receive instruction and advice from the state's governor, military leaders and government officials.

"This program is number one in the nation because of the established relationship between the American Legion and Tennessee Tech University," said Judge John J. Maddux Jr., circuit court judge for the 13th judicial district. "These two organizations work together to produce a top-notch product."

Beginning Sunday, delegates will be immersed in learning state government by running a mock 51st state, Boys' State. They will organize political parties and establish city, county and state governments by election, complete with primaries and political campaigns. American Legion posts across the state sponsor delegates and fund the activities held at Tennessee Tech.

This year's session also will feature an address from Gov. Bill Haslam. For the ninth consecutive year, Boys' State will host the SCALES program, the Supreme Court Advancing Legal Education for Students, during which the Tennessee Supreme Court will hold a special session to hear oral arguments in two actual Supreme Court cases.

Coleman Hawkins of Cookeville, 2012 Tennessee ALBS governor, will participate in the opening orientation and memorial service. State Reps. Ryan Williams of Cookeville and Cameron Sexton of Crossville will lead a discussion on major political issues in Tennessee on Monday. Major Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee adjutant general, will be the featured speaker at Saturday's inauguration of this year's new governor.

"Boys' State promotes a respect for our government, our leaders and our military," said Marc Burnett, director and TTU's vice president of student affairs, who has worked with the program since 1984.

During the week, Boys' Staters will receive qualified instruction and advice from elected state officials. Gov. Haslam will address the group on Tuesday afternoon. Assistant Deputy Counsel to Gov. Haslam John Rader will speak to the entire group on Monday evening. Ken Danilson will talk to delegates about volunteerism and the American Legion on Thursday evening.

Meet your 2012 Governor Coleman Hawkins

Cookeville High School's Coleman Hawkins accomplished during his nomination speech for governor of Tennessee American Legion Boys' State delegates what few candidates experience: complete silence and rapt attention in the audience.

That connection with almost 600 delegates resulted in Hawkins being elected the 2012 ALBS Governor.

"I didn't intend to run for governor, but I fell forward," said Hawkins, an all-state choir member and captain of the CHS football.

In his speech, Hawkins told delegates that he was nervous, that he always gets nervous before playing football or getting up to sing. He said his whole family sings and performs, so his dad told him being nervous is just part of having a passion for what you are doing.

"I get nervous because I care about those things. I'm nervous because I care about you," he said to delegates.

A youth leader at Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Hawkins focused his message on a Bible passage, Matt. 20:25-28, which calls him to serve.

"I didn't quote scripture to be popular or to just have a slogan," he said. "It was a theme that fit what I experienced.

"I learned that all the things that put me in this office, talking to people and caring about people, are not from me. There's nothing I can do apart from Christ," he said. "I learned that if your goal is to glorify God in whatever you do then that's what life is about."

Hawkins says a person's youth should be no excuse to sit back and let others lead and serve. He told delegates he expects more of himself and his peers.

"Many times in this world people will tell you to be normal, to act like everyone else," he said. "But I want you to do big things, to be great people and to start now."

Hawkins says he's not sure what his college major will be, but that he will continue to embrace leadership and service.

"I enjoy being a person who has a God-given ability to lead," he said.

"I would love Boys' State delegates to remember I wanted to serve them with the same heart Christ has," Hawkins said. "It's worth it to serve people. There are not many better things."

