

TENNESSEE AMERICAN LEGION

BOYS STATE

Vol. 75, No. 2, Monday, May 26, 2014
Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee

BOYS' STATE OPENS WITH ORIENTATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

Circuit Court Judge John Maddux, in his 35th 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. Tennessee American Legion State Vice-Chair Perry Roberts placed the POW-MIA flag.

Charles McCaskey, retired Army chaplain and minister of Cookeville's First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, told delegates of one day he will never forget. "I was called to meet a notification officer to notify a young lady that her husband had been killed in Vietnam. I was trying to be nice so I stepped back so he could knock on the door. The young lady opened the door; she was holding two children. She put both of them down. As the officer stood in open door way, she drew back with her fist and smacked him flush in the face. He went to his knees. Then he stood up and asked, "Is there anything else I can do for you?" Think about what I just said tomorrow. If you know of anyone who has died in service of this country, ask of the family, "Is there anything else we can do for you?"

American Legion Department Commander George Harper placed the wreath at the foot of the American flag to honor those who have given their lives for our freedom.

Cookeville/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce president George Halford encouraged delegates to "have a big time" and listen and learn and meet people. "With 600 miles from Mountain City to Memphis, most people never get together in the state like you are. Make the most of it," he said.

Tennessee Tech University President Phil Oldham welcomed everyone to campus. Marc Burnett, Boys State director, encouraged participants by talking about the legacy built by previous delegates. 2013 Boys State Gov. Logan Parsons led this year's delegates 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. 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.

"Our form of government can be improved only when citizens understand and participate in democracy," said Maddux. "Run for office, campaign for others, participate and help. It's not failure you should think about, but the fear of failure. Most of all, make friends this week.

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)

STATE REP. RYAN WILLIAMS SPEAKS ON MAJOR STATE POLITICAL ISSUES

State Rep. Ryan Williams of Cookeville spoke to delegates Monday morning. He summarized several top issues, including several that struck a chord with delegates: budget issues, opioid abuse and Common Core.

“Our number one issue is next year’s budget shortfall of \$200 million. Businesses have changed the way they report income, and business has gotten smarter than government. We have to learn how to live on less and continue to provide services.

“One of the greatest things about the state of Tennessee is the balanced budget amendment. This should be the thing that concerns you the most: We in American have too much debt. \$17 trillion is hard to explain. Take this with you: If you were to measure this debt in number of seconds, one million seconds is about 12 days. One billion seconds is about 31 years. One trillion seconds is 31,200 years. Seventeen trillion seconds is 540,000 years. If this is not sobering, there won’t be anything that is. Guess who is paying that back. You are.

“Prescription drugs abuse has reached plague-like proportions. A child born in this community is three times more likely to be born addicted to opioids than with autism. We have an abundance of access. Doctors should be allowed to make the best decisions for their patients. We have to balance the need for pain management. I don’t want to impede any end-of-life decisions, but you shouldn’t be taking them every day of your life.”

Williams talked about how introducing competition and increasing choices will help balance the concerns surrounding Common Core. Rep. Williams fielded questions from delegates. He also encouraged delegates to differentiate themselves through work ethic.

Q: Will the moratorium on PARCC test be renewed?

A: The general assembly has issued an RFP so there will be more choices for tests. The majority of the general assembly would like to see more options.

Q: Should public schools be more regulated?

A: There should be more flexibility at local level. It will require parents getting involved at local level to select textbooks and curriculum. States cannot regulate better. The federal government can’t do better.

Q: Standardized tests are more stressful than learning. Why use them?

A: Balance is needed. Only 15 percent of teacher evaluation relates to student scores. I think since we have been holding teachers accountable we have seen a dramatic uptick because we are measuring. No standardized tests would mean saying no to federal dollars.

Q: What are your views about Tennessee Promise?

A: First, I wasn’t a big fan. I thought we shouldn’t be giving kids anything. But we need people with certificates, in welding for instance, so they can get a good paying job. I voted for it and hope it doesn’t impede our four-year institutions. I think it is a good use of lottery surplus dollars.

Q: How will the state sustain Tennessee Promise and when will it begin?

A: It starts with the graduating class of 2015. It is a last dollar scholarship, so you still need to fill out the FAFSA. Those dollars generated were transferred to an endowment, \$300 million of lottery proceeds, plus \$43 million. The program is sustainable on just using interest on the money.

Q: What do you think about privacy in digital age?

A: I’ve fought this battle for three years. When the constitution was written, no one could imagine a drone could hover over your backyard for days. I believe we should establish vertical property rights. States should take a leading role and make decisions. If you have a drone and it hovers over my backyard, I’m going to shoot it.

