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BOYS STATE

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BOYS' STATE OPENS WITH ORIENTATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE

In his third year overseeing the program, Judge Gary McKenzie 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. McKenzie follows in the footsteps of Judge John Maddux, who served 35 years as Boys State Board of Directors chairman. Tennessee American Legion Adjutant and Finance Officer Dean A. Tuttle placed the POW-MIA flag on stage, and State Commander Nancy Harper positioned the wreath at the foot of the American flag to honor those who have given their lives for our freedom.

Col. Charles McCaskey, retired Army chaplain and minister of Cookeville's First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, gave a passionate address. "Memorial Day is a day to remember and to celebrate those who died so that you could attend Boys State at Tennessee Tech. Who died so you can go to the school of your choice. Who died so you can vote in the next election. Who died so you can go to the church of your choice or not go to church. Who died so you can drive up and down the highways.

"You have freedom because someone else earned it for you. You are free and you will be free because someone else paid the price. If you do not respect those who gave their lives, shame on you," he admonished.

Cookeville/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce president George Halford encouraged delegates. "Tennessee is a broad state, and this is a rare opportunity to make these relationships. Sen. Lamar Alexander says the seed to be governor was planted at Boys State, and this can be your moment too. Have fun, learn and network."

Marc Burnett, Boys State director in his 33rd year with the program, encouraged participants to lead. "As you go through the week, there are many people here who are leaders who look for other leaders to follow in their footsteps," he said. "You will never experience anything like this again."

Nathan Longfellow, current TNALBS Chief Justice, led this year's delegates in taking the Boys State pledge.

Judge McKenzie challenged delegates. "Somebody, somewhere someone believes in you. We need leaders. Judges, governors, and senators have been where you sit now. Get out of your comfort zone. This is your opportunity."

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)

Williams, Bailey and Sherrell speak on Major Political Issues in Tennessee

State Rep. Ryan Williams, Rep. Paul Sherrell and Sen. Paul Bailey led an information and Q&A session on hot topics being discussed in the state legislature. They covered top issues, including IMPROVE Act, healthcare, legalizing marijuana, gun legislation and how lobbyists work.

Williams, House Republican Caucus Chairman, opened by describing a couple of bills he carried this session. "We worked to create a connection with teacher education programs and school systems. Teachers are better able to serve students when teachers in university programs are actively involved with their school systems."

Bailey lauded what he called proactive legislation that says college campuses cannot restrict free speech. He also applauded TN Reconnect and efforts to make a college education affordable.

Sherrell encouraged delegates to work hard and establish goals for their future.

All elected officials extended their availability to students and met with dozens of Boys Staters after the scheduled session to listen and answer questions.

Do you support legalizing marijuana for medical or recreational purposes?

Williams: I do not support legalizing recreational marijuana, but you would probably be surprised that I led the passing of the first bill in Tennessee to allow medical marijuana research. I watched my father-in-law suffer a terminal illness, and I believe there is a purpose for the properties of marijuana.

What does the Guns in Parks bill do and why support it?

Williams: The original guns in parks bill delegated state authority to others, and the result was like pulling a thread on a sweater. We had to come back and fix it; it was not enforceable. The new bill said if you are going to prohibit guns, then you have to enforce it at your own expense. Gun-free zones are only respected by law-abiding citizens.

Do you see tuition being lowered for four-year universities?

Williams: The Tennessee Higher Education Commission sets the range for university tuition increases. Like healthcare, costs continue to rise, so tuition will probably never decrease.

What is being done about expanding broadband in rural areas?

Bailey: We have helped with broadband accessibility. The new act gives \$45 million in incentives to expand into rural areas. We've been very proactive.

What kind of environmental legislation is being discussed?

Bailey: I carried a bill to put a moratorium on wind turbines on top of Crab Orchard. They would have stood over 650 feet tall. We are asking TDEC and TWRA this: Do we need wind turbines in Tennessee? They are supposed to generate energy, but we have hydro, nuclear and coal within 30 miles.

What are your views on lobbyists in state government?

Bailey: I have learned to use lobbyists for information. They can have a bad name, but they can be effective educators. Williams: Good lobbyists tell you both sides. But for local communities, the greatest form of lobbying is to have a local group communicate their decisions to their representative.

Fast Fact: State senators are allowed to carry 50 bills per year, while House representatives are limited to 15 bills per year.