

2017 Virginia State Youth Education Summit



Fourteen talented youth from across the Commonwealth of Virginia traveled to Richmond to attend the 2017 Virginia Youth Education Summit (Y.E.S.) program that ran from July 13 to July 16. They toured the Capitol building, and visited other sites around Richmond, to learn more about Virginia government, history and leadership while competing for scholarships. At the closing awards on Sunday, Justin Vance of Pounding Mill was selected to represent Virginia at National Y.E.S. in Washington, DC, next year.

The Y.E.S. program is funded by grants through The NRA Foundation. The funds raised by Friends of NRA events, covers students' expenses to attend as an investment in America's future leaders. Each participant was selected from a multi-faceted application including a personal statement, a resume of extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation and academic performance.

The students arrived on Thursday at the Linden Row Inn to meet the other participants. The afternoon activities began when RVA Trolley took the students to the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. The tour included hands on exhibits and lessons on economics, and demonstrated the roles citizens play in our economy. A bag of money that was made up of shredded bills taken out of circulation was given to the students to take home. Next on the schedule, was a tour of the beautiful Maymont Mansion which was the 12,000 square foot, 33-room home of James and Sallie Dooley. Everyone was hungry and glad to enjoy the wonderful selection of pizza from Bottoms Up Pizza before returning to the Linden Row Inn for an evening of learning about public speaking, etiquette and participated in some lively discussion about our Second Amendment rights



On Friday, the students spent the morning at the Capitol building that was designed by Thomas Jefferson, and built in 1785, has been host to several important moments in American history, especially during the Civil War when Richmond served as the capital of the Confederacy. The building is the second oldest Capitol building still in legislative use in the United States. Maryland's State House is the oldest having been built in 1772.

A tour of the Capitol gave the students insight into the history of the building and the protocol of the legislative process in the Commonwealth. A mock legislative session in the House Chamber gave the students a chance to participate in the legislative process. Delegate Buddy Fowler of the 55th District joined the students for lunch in House Room 2 of the Capitol, and spoke of life in politics. He reminded them of the importance of getting involved in our legislative process and shared some of his experiences as a delegate.



RVA Trolley then drove the group to tour the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries building in Henrico. Bob Duncan, Executive Director of VADGIF, and Lee Walker, Outreach Director, presented the students with information about the agency, their function, and the impact that citizens have on wildlife and their habitat. Karen Holson talked about the National Archery in the Schools program and gave the group some basic instruction on how to shoot archery.



The next stop was a visit to the Jefferson Lakeside Country Club for dinner. The

students were led to the Lakeside room and heard about the beginning of Jefferson Lakeside Country Club and many of the exciting things happening there today. Dinner was enjoyed and then some students bravely got up and gave their short prepared speeches in front of their peers. The evening ended with the remaining students presenting prepared speeches about current event.

The next morning the group visited the Cavalier Rifle & Pistol Club. Firearm safety and safe firearm handling procedures were explained to the students on both the rifle and pistol range and the shotgun range. They were then given the opportunity to shoot a variety of firearms on both ranges. Some students had never shot before and quickly learned how much fun the shooting sports can be. After a great morning of shooting, everyone enjoyed lunch in the air conditioning and some good fellowship, before heading back to Richmond.

Lexy Higgins, NRA-ILA representative, greeted the students as they returned from their range activities and presented information on the importance and relevance of preserving our Second Amendment right. Some engaging discussion ensued throughout the evening. Urban Farmhouse catered dinner and everyone enjoyed some relaxing time over a good meal. Next, on the agenda were informal group debates on some of the topics currently seen in the news.

On Sunday, the students gave group presentations on their Y.E.S. experience in the beautiful garden of the Linden Row Inn. Classroom activities continued with a presentation on leadership skills as the Summit was wrapping up. Parents joined everyone around noon and scholarship winners were announced. Scholarship recipients were chosen based on a variety of factors observed throughout the Summit. They included public speaking, confidence, leadership, teamwork and attitude, to name a few. The chaperones had some tough decisions to make because all these talented students demonstrated abilities to become outstanding citizens in their communities. Electra Ellis of Dinwiddie was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship; Matthew Arnold of Nokesville and Madison Miller, also of Nokesville, were awarded \$750 scholarships. Finally, a \$500 scholarship was awarded to Justin Vance of Pounding Mill and he was chosen to represent Virginia at National Y.E.S. next year in Washington, D.C. These amazing young people are our leaders of tomorrow and an inspiration to us all.

Special thanks should be given to Scott Sampson of Chesapeake, Alex Pearce of Red House and Hunter Bolan of Keysville for their time and talent contributions to the 2017 Youth Education Summit. These men have been with the Virginia program since it started in 2013. Mr. Sampson's specialty is public speaking and leadership, and each year provides the students with valuable information they can use as they continue in their academic and professional careers. Mr. Pearce is a National Y.E.S. alumni from 2011. He is currently working on his MBA at Radford University and is able to offer insight to the students about the National Y.E.S. program but is also able to interact with the students as a mentor and advisor. Mr. Bolan, our youngest chaperone, is also a National Y.E.S. alumni from 2012 and is currently attending Radford University. His photographer skills capture the images of our Y.E.S. program.

Senior NRA Field Rep for Virginia, David Wells, states: "This year's state summit was an amazing experience for not only the students in attendance but also for

everyone that came in contact with this great program. The credit all goes to a great team of volunteers, that planned, coordinated and chaperoned this entire event." It's become a catch phrase of mine, but the Y.E.S. program is one of the most rewarding programs that I work with. This program is a true investment in our future leaders of tomorrow.

Apply to attend the Virginia State Y.E.S. program next year! The dates will be July 12 - 15, 2018. Contact David Wells at (434) 696-2189 or dwells@nrahq.org for more information.