

Learning to Lead

Louisiana Youth Seminar provides leadership training to students

- By [CHANTE DIONNE WARREN](#)
- Advocate staff writer
- Published: Jul 24, 2008 - Page: 1E - UPDATED: 12:05 a.m.

[Comments \(0\)](#)

Curfews were relaxed for high school members of Louisiana Youth Seminar while they practiced parliamentary procedures, campaigned for political choices, told jokes, gave speeches, danced and cheered through the wee morning hours at a mock caucus.

“It’s actually like a real U.S. congressional caucus. In those seven hours of caucus meetings, you stay on your toes and they crack jokes. The energy is insane,” said Kady Rost, 17, of Maurice, who at 4-foot-8 inches, commanded a delegation of about 100 people in the Whig party.

About 200 teenagers gathered this month at the 38th annual Louisiana Youth Seminar at LSU where they experienced a hands-on week of political campaigns, elections, public speaking and team and leadership building games. LYS is a nonprofit organization that provides leadership training to high school students.

The seminar ended July 18, but students are carrying the lessons they learned to their cities and into their schools, said Joe Eldridge, assistant program director of Louisiana Youth Seminar.

“It’s about let’s go out and change the state and make things better,” Eldridge said.

Rost agreed. She was all about learning and having fun, but she also kept her delegates mindful of conduct rules.

The seminar gave Rost a glimpse of her own capabilities, and it showed her how a lot of other students might fare.

“I’ve learned more about myself, and I’m more comfortable in my skin. It’s a life-changing process,” Rost said. “If these people are the future for Louisiana, then we are in very good hands.”

Though Collin Hale, 17, of Crowley, ran and lost for president, he said he grew more confident around people, because of public speaking opportunities where “everyone supports us and you can be yourself.”

Students also talked about problems and discussed solutions to some of Louisiana’s issues. They plan to forward their opinions to the Louisiana Youth Advisory Council, a state governmentformed group.

Political figures need to take more interest in teens’ issues if candidates expect support when students reach voting age. “Politicians always want our vote, but they need to speak on our level,” said Tommie Anzalone, of Crowley, who at 15 is just a few years away from voter eligibility.

Teens are also concerned about overpopulated public schools and underage drinking. They want schools to offer students more “real world preparation,” such as teaching them to change a flat tire and balance a checkbook, Anzalone said.

Elected student leaders for Louisiana Youth Seminar also said they want Louisiana to improve education and do more to challenge students and offer them a tougher curriculum.

“Louisiana’s curriculum is poor. We are only getting taught about the things we are tested on,” said Gregory Spencer Jr., 18, of Crowley.

Kaitlin Kates, 16, of Morgan City, said students need to get motivated about their futures. “When it comes to school, there is a lack of passion and drive and no one tries to be the best, but rather, they want to just get by.”


Other parts of the seminar taught students lessons in teamwork, leadership and trust through team-building games.

When Bill Croughman, 15, of Crowley, participated in a game of “tangle,” he quickly learned how difficult it can be to escape two dozen hands of students linked together.

Students were allowed to stretch their arms and step through one another. “I don’t know if we’re untangling or getting more tangled,” laughed Croughman.

Find this article at:

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/features/25839759.html?showAll=y&c=y>

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.