

Life as Congressional page suits McQ junior

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — When you talk about cities that hold significant educational value, Washington, D.C. has to be near the top of the list.

And Sean Bielat is getting an education in our nation's capital that very few 16-year-olds can ever hope to receive.

Bielat, a junior at McQuaid Jesuit High School, 1800 Clinton Ave. S., is currently on a four-month tour of duty in Washington as a Congressional page. Sponsored by Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-30th District, Bielat is one of only 66 people from across the country to have been accorded this honor.

"Being in Washington, you learn a lot about everything. It's like college, but you have more curfews," said Bielat in an interview from his Pittsford home, where he was visiting family over Easter.

A parishioner at Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford, he earned his page nomination based on several essays he wrote after responding to a letter circulated by Rep. Slaughter's office to Rochester-area high schools.

Bielat arrived in Washington in late January and is scheduled to stay until

early June.

Most days on Capitol Hill are crammed with activities for Bielat. He begins classes at the House of Representatives Page School every weekday at 6:45 a.m. His courses include physics, American literature, American history and pre-calculus.

He arrives at the Capitol at 10 a.m. to begin his Democratic page duties, which usually last until about 5 p.m. but sometimes go as late as midnight depending on how long Congress remains in session.

Bielat is a "runner," hand-delivering documents and letters from building to building. This can amount to a lot of walking: there are three House office buildings, three Senate office buildings and two House annex buildings located near the Capitol.

According to Bielat, each trip is at least a half-mile and he goes on an average of five or six runs per day.

Although he doesn't get to directly deliver the packages to members of Congress or Senate — they're passed off to other interns — the McQuaid Jesuit student does have the opportunity to witness a great deal of high-level government policy-making.

"The Senate members will often stop to talk to the pages on the floor. When



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

McQuaid Jesuit junior Sean Bielat relaxes in his Pittsford home April 19 before heading back to Washington, D.C. to resume his duties as a Congressional page.

they're in session, there's a lot fewer members in the chamber than you'd expect," Bielat noted.

In addition to his regular duties, he has shaken hands with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, as well as celebrities such as baseball star David Justice and actor Stacy Keach. He has also gotten up-close looks at President George Bush and Vice-President Dan Quayle.

"It's pretty incredible — it's just strange seeing these people in person. They're not just an image anymore," said Bielat. "The novelty still hasn't worn off. You realize that come June, this isn't going to happen again."

Bielat is paid \$970 per month, and all of his class credits will transfer to McQuaid Jesuit.

A 90-average student, Bielat is unsure whether he will pursue a career in government. Father William McCusker, his guidance counselor at McQuaid, thinks politics would be an excellent move for the Pittsford youth.

"Sean is a kid who has some noble ideas about doing good for the government," said Father McCusker, who recommended Bielat for the page position. "And he's particularly good in the verbal area."

"He's a very responsible kid. I don't think anybody's ever had to tell him to study, or give him any additional motivation," Father McCusker continued. "I wouldn't have recommended him

unless I thought he could be responsible with the freedom the kids have down there."

Bielat has grown quite close to the other pages who live with him in the O'Neill Building, one of the House annex buildings. "We live, work and go to school together, so we've become good friends," he said.

In fact, returning to Pittsford in June might be a rather challenging adjustment for somebody who's been leading a largely grown-up lifestyle over the last couple of months.

"Being on my own, coming back home is going to be a little restrictive," he admitted.

DeSales sets fundraiser to benefit school musical

GENEVA — DeSales High School will hold an "Adopt-A-School Night" on Monday, May 4, at the Burger King restaurant, 436 Hamilton St.

DeSales teachers, staff and parents will work behind the counter from 4 to 8 p.m. Money raised will go toward expenses for DeSales' upcoming performance of the musical, *The Apple Tree*, scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, May 16-17.

For information about this fundraiser, or to make donations for the musical, contact Kathy Peters at 315/539-8860.

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