

Palmyra teen discovers reality of political life

Earns selection in mock system

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

PALMYRA — The next time Katie Baynes hears a political joke, she may show a little more sympathy toward its targets.

After participating in a mock-government system for one week, Baynes is much more conscious of politicians' struggles.

"I really learned what goes on in a government. Now I understand why it takes so long for government to get things done," said the 17-year-old parishioner of St. Anne's Church, 136 Church St.

She spent the week of June 28-July 3 at Russell Sage College in Troy, N.Y., where she represented Palmyra's James R. Hickey Post in the American Legion Empire Girls' State.

Approximately 350 young women participated, all of whom will be high school seniors this fall. A student at Palmyra-Macedon High School, Baynes was one of seven Wayne County residents at Girls' State.

Participants split up into 11 groups, or "wards," each of which was separated into two "parties" and was facilitated by an American Legion Auxiliary member. The groups then acted out routine functions of city, county and state government. After elections were held early in the week, bills were voted on toward the program's end.

"During the state government part, when we were trying to pass bills, we tried to do it as quickly as we could because we were only given three or four hours. It's a good thing we had (the time limit); if we didn't, we could have been there forever," observed Baynes, who served as an assemblyperson.

The sometimes-grueling, daily sessions — which ran all morning and afternoon — made Baynes more aware of the frustrations that politicians encounter in trying to get their messages across to a large assembly.

"People were getting upset because they weren't getting a chance to voice their feelings," she said.

"They really go at it; they really get hyped up," added Anna Marie Nellis, the Wayne County Girls' State chairperson.

Issues discussed at Girls' State in-



Katie Baynes served as an assemblyperson in a mock-government system for one week at Russell Sage College in Troy, N.Y. She represented Palmyra's James R. Hickey Post in the American Legion Empire Girls' State.

cluded "abortion, capital punishment, and women's rights — everything you read about in the paper," said Baynes.

One of four Palmyra-Macedon High finalists for the trip to Troy, Baynes was selected, along with classmate Megan Taylor — who served as an alternate — by a three-person American Legion Auxiliary committee. Candidates are not required to have an American Legion affiliation, but the Legion still picks up all the representatives' expenses.

"I was happy that I was being considered. I had known about Girls' State, and I wanted to go. I thought it would be interesting and fun," Baynes remarked.

Baynes was certainly a worthy representative: she is ranked No. 1 in her class at Palmyra-Macedon with a 96-average, and her favorite classes are "history and social studies." Her extracurricular activities include National Honor Society and yearbook co-editor.

According to Nellis, head of the selection committee, Baynes was a

clear-cut choice.

"We look for a girl who has leadership ability, is in the top third of her class, and is not afraid to show her feelings and back them up," said Nellis, who is also a St. Anne's parishioner.

"I can't say enough about Katie. She's bubbly and gets along with others. Her teachers spoke very highly of her," added Nellis, a 43-year charter member of the James R. Hickey Post. "She's a girl who wants to know the facts and the whys."

Looking ahead to the future, Baynes noted that she has begun thinking about college and would like to eventually attend law school.

Her recent experience at Girls' State convinced Baynes that a career in government will probably not be her first choice.

"Politics is really interesting, but I'm not sure I want to get into it," she concluded.

Nazareth establishes fund

ROCHESTER — Nazareth Academy is seeking financial assistance for the family of Alphonse Malocaj.

Mr. Malocaj, a 24-year-old Albanian refugee, was struck and killed by a hit-and-run truck on July 21, 1992. His aunt and uncle, Rosa and Tony Vulaj, both work at the all-girls' school on Lake Avenue.

Mr. Malocaj had come to the United States two years ago after fleeing Albania to escape political persecution. His uncle, who fled Communist Albania in the mid-1960s, helped arrange Mr. Malocaj's move to this country.

Donations will help defray funeral expenses. Contributions may be sent to Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave., Rochester, N.Y., 14613. Checks should be made payable to the Alphonse Malocaj Memorial Fund.

Call Adele McCarthy at 716/458-8583 for further details.



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