

The Trip of a Lifetime

Washington Youth Tour offers leadership skills and a history lesson to high school kids

By Diane Junion

Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Four local students had the privilege of spending a week in Washington, D.C., to see government in action and to visit the memorials of forefathers who formed this nation, perhaps planting the seeds

Students Brianna McBride, Conner Palmer, Aleesha Clonts and Tevin Broadhead, along with chaperones Lynette and Tad Jacobson traveled with another 45 students from Arizona and Southern California to tour the nation’s capital.

“I still feel as if it were a dream, with standing on hallowed grounds of Arlington and gazing at the countless rows of my brothers and sisters laying side by side as martyrs for their country,” says Conner, a student from Thatcher High School. “I looked at the amazing memorials built to honor and pay tribute to some of our nation’s greatest leaders.

“I was brought to tears reading the constitution and was able to stand with nearly 1,000 youth to salute and pay respect to our beautiful flag. This trip and experience has taught me I can be leader and make a difference.”

Brianna, also from Thatcher, says, “I gained greater appreciation for our country and the sacrifices that are made to keep our country free. As we visited Arlington cemetery and attended the military parade of the Iwo Jima monument, I realized the sacrifices that have been made so I can have so many freedoms, and the people that have helped shape this nation.”

Tevin, a student from Safford High



From left, the Graham County delegation includes chaperones Tad and Lynette Jacobson, Conner Palmer, Tevin Broadhead, Aleesha Clonts and Brianna McBride.

School, says his favorite part of the trip was the reverence felt at Arlington National Cemetery. Seeing all those who

served and died while protecting our country was moving.

“I never realized how patriotic



Washington was,” says Aleesha, also from Safford. “I’ve always heard of the death counts at the Arlington Cemetery in history, but going there and seeing all of those soldiers was insane. They pinned names to those numbers and made it way more personal. And just when you think you’ve reached the end of the cemetery,

Above, the Arizona delegation, which joined 1,700 other students from across the country. Left, the Washington Monument. Right, a Marine stands guard the Tomb of the Unknowns.

there’s another hill with even more white crosses.

At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, during the changing of the guard, I was watching the well-trained soldiers marching, and yet the air was filled with such respect and patriotism. It made me think of my great-grandpa who served as a Marine.”

Chaperones Lynette and Tad noted that in addition to Arlington National Cemetery, the peace and reverence felt during the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns was a tremendous experience. Tad is a history teacher for Safford High School. He says he could keep going back every year and still learn something different, and noted this was a great opportunity for the kids.

The students and chaperones advise other local juniors to apply for this trip, as it was an experience of a lifetime. The application process begins mid-October for the 2017 trip. Contact GCEC for details. ■



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