

Thune urges Girls Staters to serve with purpose

By Travis Gulbrandson
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During his visit with the 2012 South Dakota Girls State attendees, Sen. John Thune (R) said they need to commit themselves to three points in order to be successful leaders: Excellence, character and service.

The senator made his comments in the Aalfs Auditorium on the USD campus Thursday morning.

In discussing excellence, Thune clarified that he didn't mean "perfection."

"Really, excellence is making the most out of what you've been given," he said. "Everybody here has some God-given abilities, gifts, talents. They may be different for all of us. Not everybody's a scholar, not everybody's a musician, not everybody's an athlete, but everybody has something that they can contribute, that they can use to make the world a better place."

"Excellence has to do with making that most of that ability," he said.

To illustrate this, Thune related an incident that occurred when he was on his high school basketball team his senior year.

One point behind with five seconds to go in the fourth quarter, Thune received a pass and shot. And missed.

"I'm sitting in the locker room after the game ... because I really felt like I had let my teammates down," he said. "And my coach comes up to me and taps me on the shoulder and says, 'John, it's time to get on the bus. And by the way, track starts next week.'"

Thune said his coach new he hated track, "but he was sending me a very important message, and that is, 'I know you played as hard as you could, I know you gave it

everything that you have. It didn't work out ... but there's always another opportunity."

A commitment also is important, Thune told the Girls Staters.

"Character has to do with the kind of person that you are, the quality, the attributes that you have as an individual," he said. "Are you honest? Are you fair? Do you treat

other people with respect? Do you play by the rules? Do you take responsibility for your actions?"

Acting with character may mean not doing the "popular thing," Thune said, but it may mean doing the right thing.

"Character is what defines you as a person. It's how you'll be remembered after you're gone," he said.

Finally, Thune said the girls should make a commitment to service and serving others.

"Ultimately, leadership is really about serving," he said. "We talk about public service, but the reality is, that is what it's all about. If you're looking at any venue of life ... there are all these opportunities, no matter what career path you choose, no matter where you are in

life, to serve other people."

It could be as simple as helping someone with their yard work, or helping friends when they have problems, he said.

Thune cited the book, "A Purpose Driven Life," by Rick Warren.

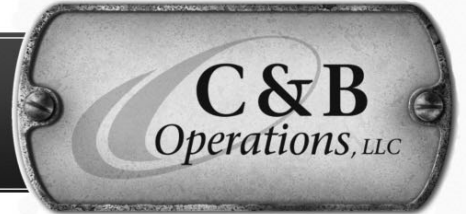
"The first sentence in that book is, 'It's not about you,'" he said. "Every single day I've tried to

remember that."

He added that he hoped the attendees would take advantage of the experiences they gain throughout the week.

"This is a great opportunity for you to come to Girls State (and) learn about the political process," Thune said. "Obviously somebody in your community has recognized leadership abilities that you have."

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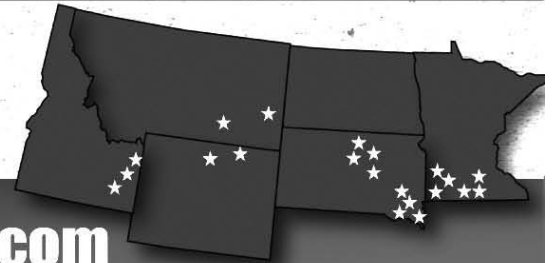
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