

Daugaard urges Girls State delegates to 'think big'

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Stay persistent and determined, get involved in public service and dream big.

These are the three pieces of advice Gov. Dennis Daugaard offered the attendees of 2012 South Dakota Girls State, whom he addressed Friday morning in Aalfs Auditorium.

Daugaard opened with a quote from Calvin Coolidge:

"Nothing can take the place of persistence and

determination. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men of talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts.

"Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

Daugaard said he was "not knocking" genius, talent or education in and of themselves.

"All those things are very important ... but they're worth nothing if

you don't have persistence and determination to achieve your goals," he said.

The governor told the girls that they were "on the brink of big decisions" in their lives.

One of those decisions is whether to get involved in public service, and Daugaard said he hopes they decide to be as involved as they can.

He cited the trip he took earlier this year to Afghanistan.

"It's an ugly country. It is chaotic, it is dangerous. I wore body armor

wherever I went, and a helmet," he said. "Every house has a wall around it. It's an awful country to be in. Then I got back to America and there was freedom. ...

"I can choose my government, I can choose my religion, I can associate with whoever I want, I can speak freely," Daugaard said. "All of those things are because of our democracy. But democracy only works if there are people who care about it and become involved in public service."

He added that they don't have to wait to get involved, pointing to several members of the state legislature who were elected in their early- to mid-20s.

Daugaard also encouraged the Girls Staters to "dream big."

"In your life, probably the biggest obstacle you face is not that you came from a poor family that didn't have much money, or you came from a small town that didn't have options, or that your dad is an alcoholic, or that your parents got

divorced, or any of those things," he said. "Those are obstacles that you may face, but the biggest obstacle is in your head."

If you "think small," he said, you will achieve small.

"The bigger you think, the more you achieve," Daugaard said. "And throw that obstacle in your head out, because you've got talent, you've got genius, you've got determination."

"Have persistence and determination and think big, and you'll go far," he said.

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