

Noem Uses The Past To Inspire Future Leaders

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Seize every opportunity. Three simple words that US Representative Kristi Noem hopes the participants of Girls State take to heart. Noem, who spoke to the Girls State representatives Friday night at the MUC ballroom on the campus of the University of South Dakota, said if the girls take nothing else from the week, she hopes they learn that they don't have to be afraid to try. (Speaking at events like this is one of the things that has always been a priority for me, because I remember things that people said to me when I was this age that changed how I felt," Noem said following her speech. "I was a very insecure person in high school and people said things to me that showed that I could contribute and that is helpful."

She commented that if the attendees of Girls State learn to take opportunities when they come, they will be successful.

"I think a lot of times we talk ourselves out of doing things before we ever experience them," Noem said. "So, I hope they see something and just go try it. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. I think a lot of times people look at failure as something that is big and scary when, really, it is just a teaching opportunity."

Using two examples of women who went outside their traditional roles and life stories, Noem hoped to impress on those in attendance that many times we are our own worst enemy.

"I know that many times when we come to big groups, we come in not very sure of ourselves," she said. "Have you ever driven your car and realized that it is driving very hard, that it just doesn't feel like it is working correctly? It's jerking and it's stiff, then after a while you look down and realize your emergency brake is on. Aren't you amazed when you take the emergency brake off? It feels like someone gave you a brand new car."

Noem said many people go through life with their emergency brake on.

"Maybe we don't think we are smart enough, pretty enough, skinny enough, whatever it is, we all put our emergency brake on and it will make your life harder if you leave it on," she said. "I would just like to encourage you to take your emergency brake off. Stop worrying about all those insecurities, just let it go and be yourself. If you leave those on, it will



SHAUNA MARLETTE/FOR THE PLAIN TALK
South Dakota's US House Representative Kristi Noem spoke to the Girls State attendees Friday Night at the MUC ballroom on the campus of the University of South Dakota. Noem stressed to the girls that they need to be leaders for the future and not be afraid to try new things. Pictured is Girls State attendee Taliitha Greaver.

be a much harder and more difficult life. If it is something that needs to be done – an opportunity to change the world around you – I hope all of you grab it."

Noting that there is no such thing as a boy's job or a girl's job, Noem used the example of Jeannette Rankin, the first woman ever elected to US Congress.

"Jeannette Rankin was active about 130 years ago," Noem said. "One of the reasons Jeannette became such a hard worker was because there were not very many boys in her family. Everything she did to help her dad and her mom was not a girl's job or a boy's job, it was just a job that needed to be done. ... It taught her a lot of perseverance doing those jobs that traditionally would have been a boy's jobs, which I think gave her a perspective that she would eventually work at."

Noem said she found Rankin inspirational in that she didn't stay in her box.

"What I have learned as I studied her life is that the positions she took and the things that she worked on, at that time, were not always things that people thought women should be concerned about on," she said. "During her time in Congress she focused on foreign policy. During that time, they tried to put women in a box and said that women should only be concerned about their families or education. But she changed that on a national level. It reminds me a lot of the lessons that you may be learning here this week, as well."

Noem said her upbringing was similar, as she was always helping her father on their family farm.

"My life was devastated when I was attending college and my dad was killed in an accident on the farm," she said. "When he passed away, we didn't know what we were going to do. I quit college and came home to take over the operation to try to make it survive and carry on. The challenging thing during that time was that we immediately, within about a month, got a bill from the IRS saying we owed the federal government money because my dad had died. There is a tax that happens called the death tax, when someone passes away, everything they own is taxed and you have to pay it to the federal government."

She explained that her family had land, cows and machinery, but no cash to pay the tax.

"My dad had always raised me that as a farmer you don't sell land because God isn't making any more land," she said. "But sell land that had been in my family for generations, or take out a loan and pay those taxes were my only options. I took out a loan but it took us 10 years to pay off that loan. At that point and time I thought a lot about advice that my dad had given me. Anytime I complained about something or didn't like something he would say, 'Don't complain, unless you are going to do something about it.'"

She said it was at that point she got involved in the state legislature.

Noem then used the story

shove, do the right thing no matter if it's the popular thing," he continued. "When I hire people for my offices I hire people who are bright, talented, things like that. But more important than that I want people of character, people who will do the right thing no matter the consequences."

Finally, Thune said successful individuals have made a commitment to a life of service.

"I think when we get up in the morning and face our day and realize it's not about us we have a lot better day thinking about influencing the lives around us," he said. "The most content people in life are those who find purpose and meaning not by being obsessed with themselves but making a difference in the lives of those around us."

It's not as hard as it might seem to do this according to Thune.

"There are things you can do every day," he said. "If you have an elderly neighbor who can't clear her sidewalk in the winter you can help out. If a classmate of younger brother or sister has a tough day at school you can come up alongside and give them a pat on the back and help them get through it. There are lots of ways every single day that you can look around you and see needs around you and meet those needs."

In conclusion, Thune recognized all that there is to be grateful for in the United State.

"There's so much history and we're such a blessed country because of those who came before us," he said. "We are so, so fortunate."

Thune

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would have won his team the game and landed in them in the playoffs.

After the game, Thune said he was taught a valuable lesson.

"My coach came up to me and taps me on the shoulder and said, 'It's time to get on the bus. By the way track starts next week,'" Thune said. "He knew I hated track but he was sending me an important message. And that was: yes you missed the shot, yes we didn't win the game but you played as hard as you could and gave it everything you had. There's always another season, there's always another opportunity."

"To me that was an important affirmation that it really is what you put into it. You may not always get the win but as long as you're giving it your best along the way, you're committed to excellence."

The second attribute of successful people according to Thune is those who are committed to character.

"You've probably heard it defined as what you do when no one else is looking," he said. "I think it has to do with the character qualities that you have. Are you honest? Do you play by the rules? Do you treat other people with respect? Do you take responsibility or do you blame somebody else?"

"People of character, when push comes to

Beverage

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The Second Penny Fund is fronting \$1 million for the renovations at Prentis. Schoellerman noted.

"The Second Penny is essentially from bars, restaurants, and hotels, so we're paying a portion of (the pool) already from our sales tax," he said. "Now they're going to increase our costs."

Schoellerman and other business owners are still adjusting to the wake of a minimum wage increase from \$7.25 to \$8.50, a rather large spike that has affected their businesses directly as

of January 1, 2015.

While not sure if the tax increase would cause a loss of business, Schoellerman added it won't help.

"You know, I don't know. I don't know what to expect," he said. "We're all pretty new, we have three young bar owners in Vermillion that are getting started and trying to get their businesses off the ground."

These kinds of tax increases are not altogether uncommon anywhere in the United States, but Schoellerman warns that every cost affects people's pocket books.

"If you continue to raise your prices for every little thing that happens, suddenly you're at \$6 a beer, and people can't afford that," he

said. "So, then the people that used to come twice a week and have a couple beers might only come once a week and have one beer, or they might not have any beer at all."

According to Schoellerman, the City Council told the concerned owners that they had the money required to fund the renovation, but that they wanted this ordinance to replenish the reserves.

While Schoellerman and his fellow business owners are consistently approving of the renovations at Prentis Park, they want the public to know, "what's truly going on" as the city moves forward with the construction.

of Grace Hopper, a World War II era mathematician to explain why it is so important to try to succeed, even when told you can't.

"Grace Hopper went to work for one of the contractors working on one of the very first mechanical computers," Noem said. "She became the programmer for that and realized that it was very difficult to communicate with the computer because it only talked in mathematical terms. So, if you wanted to use this computer or any other computer developed you had to know mathematics. She didn't think that was very smart. So in 1949, she said she was going to fix it. She started talking to people, asking, 'Don't you think computers should be able to do the mathematics but understand human language?' Everyone thought she was crazy."

Noem said it took Hopper 10 years, but she developed the very first language that allowed people to use human language and talk to comput-

ers. It was called COBOL. Twenty years later, more than 70 percent of computers had that language in them.

"It was because of one woman, doing a job that no woman had done before, in a very difficult time during our nation," she said. "She stepped up and said, 'I can do this.' It changed the way the world operates."

"Even though we look at these women and think they must be phenomenal women who changed the world around them, I hope that all of you realize that is the impact you can have on the world."

Noem said the Girls State attendees should never let anyone say they can't do anything.

"When I ran for Congress the first time, I talked to several people; I had a couple of men tell me they wouldn't support me because they didn't think women should be in leadership positions," she said. "This was just five years ago. I was shocked,

but when I left I thought just because that perspective is out there doesn't mean that is what has to be. I firmly believe women have to be involved in all kinds of roles. We need women in leadership and weigh in on policy that is affecting our daily lives. We don't have women's issues in this country, we have women's perspective on every issue and I feel like we have much better policy and solutions when women are involved in the discussion."

Noem told the girls to always make an impact.

"I will tell you no matter what you do and where you go, you will change people's lives," she said. "I will tell you be bold. Speak what you think and feel because you have the opportunity to educate people. I think you all are our future. We need to make sure we have your voices out there weighing in on all the issues affecting our lives and make sure our future is just as bright as it always has been."

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