



participants at Girls State are then chosen to represent their state at Girls Nation, where the focus moves to the federal government.

"The week was spent creating a mock legislature, submitting bills and resolutions, participating in senate sessions, holding a national convention and electing officials such as president and vice president," she said.

Schenk added that there was no down time during the week spent at Girls Nation.

"When we got to Washington, right away we were split into eight communities," Schenk said. "I was in the Georgetown community. It was such a random, diverse mix, but everyone was so friendly."

She noted that while she didn't know anyone in her community - the state representatives are not put into the same group in order to facilitate getting to know the girls from the other states - she felt very comfortable with her group and they got to work right away.

"The Girls Nation organizers had posted a schedule and we started work about 40 minutes after we arrived," Schenk said. "We elected officers. They had the bills arranged; we read, debated and voted on the ones we wanted to work with. Really, this was all right up my alley as I want to be a politician."

Schenk said that the two bills her community chose to write and work on focused on Genetically Modified Food (GMO) labeling and legislation to reduce sex trafficking.

"In total we worked with 15 bills out of the 45 total that were introduced," she said. "We liked to debate."

In addition to working on the bills, the participants were able to



take special field trips including visits to the White House and Arlington National Cemetery, monument tours, and a day on Capitol Hill meeting with state senators and representatives.

"It was just awe inspiring to go to some of these places," she said. "The Holocaust Museum was one we went to that I will never forget."

When asked to reflect on what she will remember most from the event, Schenk said she will remember it all, but she thinks the relationships she made with her fellow participants will be something she carries forward the most.

"While we were there, Boys Nation was going on as well. One of the most important aspects of both events was getting to network with these amazing people," Schenk said. "When you look at the past participants and what they have gone on to do in their lives, and then you look at the goals and college plans of this year's participants, you know that no matter where I go in life, they will be there somewhere."

She said many of the participants have the same college goals and even college plans. Schenk said she plans to attend Georgetown University.

While Schenk said she hasn't spoken about her experiences to her classmates in a formal setting, she has given a speech on her experiences at Girls Nation to her local Auxiliary Post.

"I actually spoke and joined our local Auxiliary," she said. "I am excited to be a part of it and owed them a great big thank you for giving me this experience."

■ By Shauna Marlette

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