

The Girls Stater

THE ULTIMATE GIRL BOSS

Throughout the last two days, multiple women have shared their personal stories regarding one of their heroes —

Emily Thompson. Considering

I did not know anything about Emily until today, I was not able to fully comprehend the extraordinary impact she has had on so many lives. After having the honor of listening to Emily's address, I fully see how her story has the ability to resonate with every person she comes in contact with.

Emily Thompson is not only a Captain in the United States Army, but she is also a wife, mother, and an art teacher. Not only do all of these responsibilities take an extreme amount of time and dedication, but it takes selflessness. In today's world it is so easy to become consumed in oneself, whether one means to or not. Just listening to Emily speak demonstrated to me how selfless she is and I strongly assume that anyone who knows her personally would agree with me.

Having Emily address this year's Girls State delegates on Memorial Day was not only the perfect kick-off for the week, but it was a very meaningful way to observe Memorial Day. Emily discussed the sacrifices soldiers must make to perform their duties, including describing her own personal sacrifices. When Emily began to vividly describe her last night at home before deployment, tucking her young daughter into bed, not knowing when, or if, she would have the chance to do so again, I swear there was not a dry eye in the room. She also emphasized the importance of realizing that the soldier is not the only one making sacrifices. The soldier's entire family makes sacrifices too. Emily not only presented the delegates with a personal, heart-wrenching tale of sacrifice turned to joy, but she instilled in us the importance, and true meaning, of Memorial Day.

Growing up in a law enforcement family, I understand the never-ending anxiety of "what-if." Sadly, the "what-ifs" do happen. As Emily said, "not every soldier reaches the finish line." This statement. This is what Memorial Day commemo-

rates. It is simple. The soldiers we remember on Memorial Day paid the ultimate price. It is our duty to not only show respect for the soldiers lost, but to show them gratitude, for if it was not for them, we would not be blessed with the lives we live each day.

Everyone one in the room should have taken away at least one thing from Emily's speech. For me, it was knowledge and encouragement. Emily opened my eyes to the power of positivity and the wealth of knowledge that comes with being grateful in all aspects of life, because as she said, it could always be worse. She also empowered me to share my knowledge, continue to spread positivity, and find my place in this world. In short, Emily is the epitome of a girl boss. She does so much for the betterment of our country. Not only does everyone need an Emily in their life to help drive them in a positive direction, but we should all strive to be the Emily in someone else's life.

-Chelbie Turtle, Demke City



FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

Tonight the Girls State delegates had the honor of listening to the wonderful Sue Heil retell Georgia Ann Johnson's moving story of the poppy flower. Recalling the Christmas of 1944, Sue describes the joy of having two dear friends home from the US Navy and that joy quickly turning to grief after the loss of those boys a few months after. As Sue recounts the story, she strongly emphasizes that "Freedom is not free, but rather the price of eternal vigilance." The poppies come in to represent the spirit and vigilance of the melancholy terms of war.

The history of the poppy dates back to World War II, where the bright flower blossomed across the barren battlefield. These beautiful flowers were received as a message of hope and courage to those still in battle. The poppies significance has become a long lasting memorial symbol to those who have fallen and an equally significant role for our beloved veterans today. The Remembrance Poppy was inspired by John McCrae's World War I poem, "In Flanders Fields." The remembrance poppies are created using red tissue paper and wire, joined together to create a beautiful lasting symbol. Disabled and hospitalized veterans are provided with jobs and a therapeutic comfort from handcrafting each petal. Not only does this opportunity support our veterans, but it also goes to support our active soldiers and their families. The American Legion Auxiliary's 8,000 units distributes these handmade gifts to help spread the sym-

bolism of the beautiful poppy and those who have fallen. As Sue stated, "The poppy industry of the small flower is big business." Although these Remembrance Poppies are just made from simple paper and wire, they represent a deeper meaning of patriotism, a symbol of respect, and an admiration of those lost. To close the story, each Girls State delegate had the honor of placing a single poppy on a bare wreath, while reflecting on the true meaning of not only the poppy but Memorial Day.

-Chloe Zickefoose, Heil City and Abigail Boyer, Reed City



The Oklahoma Sojourners

The Oklahoma Sojourners put on a very heartfelt and touching story about how the flag was built. They left us with tons of information about how the United States was formed and the legitimate meaning behind our American flag.

They originated in the Philippines and first came to the U.S. in the year of 1927. At one time, two of the local chapters were located in Oklahoma City and at Tinker Air Force Base. Now they

have active chapters in Lawton and Tulsa.

Speaking for those who were there tonight, I can definitely say that it touched everyone's heart in some way, shape, or form. The men that performed represented Oklahoma and the United States very well. They broke down every single color, star, and gave us wonderful background knowledge of what the flag used to be. If you would like to have the Oklahoma Sojourners near you for a wonder-

ful heartfelt experience, contact Stan Jones at 405-364-2645.

-Gracie Hightower, Willits City



GIRLS NATION REPORT



I was given the privilege of interviewing the 2018 Girls Nation Senators, Kate Carpenter and Alysha Siddiqi. They both explained how honored they felt to be representing Oklahoma at a national level. Alysha explained how she felt above and beyond honored representing Oklahoma because she is not your stereotypical Okie girl. Her family is originally from Pakistan and being Muslim is not the status quo for Oklahoma gals.

I also got to hear what their favorite tour spots were. Kate's was the Holocaust Museum as it was a wake up call to her because of how those people made sacrifices and how blind she was to the fact of how terrible it was. Alysha's favorite tour spot was the Library of Congress because of her love for books. While at Girls Nation, they got to meet the Oklahoma Boys Nation Senators. Both Kate and Alysha said how fun it was to play pranks on the Boys Nation Senators; and both girls said how funny it was and how mad it made the boys.

Another one of Kate's favorite memories was a quite humorous one. While at their closing ceremony, Kate got to be a DJ and she did it while standing in a chair. Though Alysha said Kate's music was great, she described it as Kate was "getting in her feels."

While at Girls Nation, Alysha was elected Nationalist Party Chair Person. She loved being able to lead the meetings. She also told me of how this made her feel empowered in her leadership abilities. And while not everyone loves talking politics, Alysha does. She loved being able to meet people from different states and hearing their opinions.

With this experience, both girls gained valued knowledge and memories that they will keep forever.

Sunny Crawford, Keister City



Analyzing the Alpha

Sunday afternoon, hundreds of female delegates not only arrived on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, but so did an Alpha, the leader of our pack. No, she was not furious, frightening, or out for blood. Reverend Lori Walke gracefully embodied noble characteristics while encouraging hundreds of females to be loud, to be confident, and to not be afraid to stand up, push the chair back, and finally flip the table over. Her most valuable asset was her ability to galvanize a large crowd. She backed her oral presentation by factual evidence that directly shows how the lack of female legislators and leaders restricts the woman's opportunities in Oklahoma.

Furthermore, she mentioned Yellowstone National Park and the ecological challenge with deer in the park. She continued to explain how the solution was a pack of wolves and that their newly directed environment began to be positively impacted within a few weeks. She said, "Women are the wolves. We are the system's solutions." Walke described our wolf-pack like a family that is going to make the change. She challenged us to register to vote upon the arrival our 18th birthday and to get to know our wolfpack this week.

Rev. Lori Walke's utter ability to command the attention of a room and lead our pack allowed her to be a force to be reckoned with. On Sunday at the 77th Session of Oklahoma Girls State, she was the Alpha that kicked off our week with big, "Arhwoooooooooooooo." Now it is up to every delegate to continue the howl within our pack and be the system's solution together.

Jentry Squires, Blosch City

Joining the Wolf Pack

The first day of Girls State started off with a bang! The guest speaker we began with was the accomplished Reverend Lori Allen Walke. Her feminist female empowerment speech rocked the Girl Staters to their core. Reverend Walke began by asking us a very important question. Who gets to speak and who has to listen? Through her speech, she taught us that just because we are women does not mean we have to sit down. You do not have to smile more. You can do anything and be anything you want to if you just put your mind to it. We are the wolf pack and we will not back down. They will hear our voice. They will hear us howl. AWWOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Bayleigh Hudgens, Erwin City

