

Local News

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County's Youth in Governance program chooses a new class

Students learn inner workings of government

BY DENEEN SMITH

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Keith Bell said he was not too surprised when he learned his son Khari had applied to Kenosha County's Youth in Governance program.

"My younger son is always watching ESPN. With Khari, it's always CNN," he said.

Khari, a junior at Harborside Academy, was one of 14 high school students chosen for the seventh generation of Youth in Governance. Through the program, students serve a yearlong appointment to one of seven committees of the County Board. The students attend meetings and make advisory votes on issues.

Supervisor Kim Breunig said the program aims to help students learn about local government in their communities and to include the views of youths in county leadership.

On Wednesday, the most recent group was honored for completion of the program, while a new group of teens was sworn in, with an audience of family members in at-

tendance.

The students will serve through next spring.

Lengthy selection process

Breunig said the kids are chosen through a lengthy process. Students who are sophomores or juniors are nominated, with nominations coming from teachers, parents, church leaders or others in the community. Those nominated receive a letter from the county asking them to apply.

"We had 293 nominations this year. We send applications to all of those people who are nominated, and of those 63 applied," Breunig said.

Staff from the University of Wisconsin-Extension, which helps manage the program, weed through applications to choose 26 they feel are best qualified.

Those 26 are then interviewed by a committee made up of county supervisors and two current Youth in Governance members. The committee asks each person interviewed the same set of questions, with the applicants scored



Zoe Rodriguez



John Setter Jr.



Lindsey Allen



Khari Bell



Peter Wierzba



Michael Viroglio



Emily Gerstein



Nicole Hyatt



Madeline Artac



Jeromy Jorgeson



Alicia Skalitzky



Abigale Bleil



Patrick Kenney



Ashley Kenney

on a number system.

Tough choices

Breunig said the committee is trying to choose members who seem engaged and interested in the program.

"We're looking at a lot of things — do they look you in the eye when they are speaking, if they are professional in the way they are presenting themselves," she said. "They get better every year, and it is so hard to choose."

Colin Barushok, a senior at Bradford High School, is one of the outgoing members. He said he applied as a sophomore and was not chosen for the program, and

reapplied his junior year and was selected. Barushok served on the Planning, Development and Extension Education Committee.

He also served on the committee that helped choose the new members. He said it was a tough task, and difficult to be sitting on the other side of the table.

"All the applicants were good, really good."

Much to learn

Barushok, who will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison next year to study engineering, said he enjoyed his time in the program, especially site visits with the committee and

presentations from the Extension office.

"I learned a lot about farming and agriculture and livestock," he said.

The biggest surprise, he said, was learning how little disagreement there was between members of the committee, with nearly all the votes unanimous.

Khari Bell, who said he is a bit of a political junky, said he is looking forward to learning about the County Board from inside.

"I've always been interested in government, and I thought it would be a good opportunity to see how our county government works," he said.