The Virginia Scene

April 2014, Volume 34-04
TECHNOSPHERE IS NEAR..

VIRGINIA TSA, ARE YOU READY?

2013-2014 in Review:

Technosphere 2013
Regional Fall Rallies
Leadership Academy
Regional Fairs

Technosphere 2014
The Real Reason We’re All State Officers

As promised in the last edition of this exciting publication, I will be writing about the “fun” parts of being a State Officer in Virginia TSA. If you’ve been anxiously tracking every scrap of writing that’s flown off of my typewriter, you would know that I’ve already covered the serious responsibilities and actual jobs we officers have to do in order to, you know, be officers. That said, we are all real people (contrary to popular belief), and thus eventually get tired of work and responsibility. Behind the scenes, state officers do enjoy some goofing off (if you ask us, we will lie and say we never goof off; so don’t). The real perks of the job are rarely seen by the general members, so, if you’re running, here’s a taste of what you have to look forward to (if you aren’t running, you have my condolences; look on in awe as I describe the wonders you’re missing out on).

To me, the coolest part of the whole “being in charge of a super important organization and stuff” is seeing the whole backstage mess that can be missed. Setting up the workshops for Leadership Academy involved some way-to-late-in-the-night Google Hangouts and a lot of laughing and messing around with the occasional productive bit here and there that eventually became a major statewide event. Technosphere means a lot of, while not manning the Enterprising Booth (yes, this is product placement; no, I was not paid), running around and talking to people. You’d be surprised how many people can actually recognize you after being forced to watch you onstage for three hours at a general session. General sessions are a whole ‘nother ball game, though. I’ve known people who sleep through the opening and emblem ceremonies, but to us, it’s just a ton of stress about messing up. If you’re ever a state officer, here’s some advice: don’t. On a side note, when we do the emblem ceremony, you guys always go berserk when the president holds up the “Virginia” part. Fun fact: Caleb (the tall one) loves that bit as much as you all seem to. I’ve never seen someone get so excited practicing in front of roughly two people.
The new perspective is nice, but I have polled numerous state officers across two Executive Councils, and it’s nearly unanimous that the best part of being a State Officer is the food. At council meetings, the breakfasts are fantastic—though take my advice: skip the eggs, go for the pastries (and fruit, since eating healthy is good and all). I personally have grown very attached to my roast beef sandwich for working lunches that come often. And don’t get me started on when we have dinner. Mr. Stephenson has started a tradition of having one council-wide sit-down meal at the end of Leadership Academy after the members leave. It’s our way of unwinding and bonding over a really fantastic (I need to find a thesaurus for that word) dinner. For all of you making fun of me for raving so much, just remember this: you voted for me.

WARNING: THE FOLLOWING CONTAINS SEMI-SERIOUS DEEPNESS IF THIS OFFENDS YOU, PLEASE SKIP DOWN A PARAGRAPH

You don’t realize it going in, or even during your term, but the coolest and strangest and most confusing and best parts of being a state officer all come down to one thing: your fellow officers. I’ve served on two very different state councils, and I’ve learned a lot from the people I’ve worked with. I’ve heard it said that seriousness is important in a good leader. This past year has taught me differently. If you ever spend a year on council with Kelsey Stoner and Erin Sullivan, you learn quickly that being serious is not a prerequisite for leadership. On the flip side, not having a sense of humor doesn’t mean you can’t be a state officer. There is a time for focus and a time for out-of-the-box, crazy creativeness, which is good, because you’ll get both on every council. That definitely makes things interesting, and is the source of the most fun I have on council. I’d do anything for this team, and I know I can count on them to keep me on the straight and narrow. Those bonds don’t happen in everyday life. It takes the, frankly, bizarre situation of running one of the biggest and best Student Organizations in the world.
So there it is. That’s why I like being a State Officer. This basically tells you why I decided to stand up in front of a few thousand people and spill my guts. This is why I stood for six hours next to a tri-fold talking to random strangers. It it worth it? Obviously. I didn’t quit. By the time you’re reading this, applications are due, so you know if you’re running. This is what you have to look forward to. To the next generation ready to seize the reins of leadership of the Virginia Association of the Technology Student Association, I have but one thing to say: don’t mess this up. I know people.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caleb Hurst
2014
March 8, 2014

...a day that I will always remember! The 2014 South Central Region Spring Fair was an enormous success due to the hard work put forth by the South Central Region Council and numerous advisors within the region. Through the great opening ceremonies to Relay For Life fundraising events to the competitions to the food trucks to the innovative closing ceremonies, it was always amazing. Now, as we continue our journey to Technosphere and beyond, I would like to wish everyone the best of luck in their competitions! And remember, to follow Virginia TSA on Twitter @VirginiaTSA, see you all in May for a truly great Technosphere!

Respectfully Submitted,

Rajan Jani

Sergeant-At-Arms, Virginia TSA
The Tidewater Region conducted its spring fair on Saturday, March 1st, 2014 at Ocean Lakes High School in Virginia Beach, VA. Middle school and high school students from all over the region came to Virginia Beach to compete against each other. Volunteers from near and far showed their support for these young leaders as judges, coordinators, and student supervisors.

TSA members assembled in the auditorium where the Tidewater Regional TSA president, Brett Fochtmann of Middlesex High School, called the meeting to order with the Tidewater Regional board. Then guest speaker Mrs. Casandra Thomas a retired military MP, upcoming nurse, and past regional president; shared what TSA has done for her and encouraged students to continue with TSA. She the shared about how TSA helped her in her military career as an officer because of the leadership opportunities TSA has. She concluded with promoting students to join a leadership team because it would help them in the future immensely. After Mrs. Casandra concluded her presentation Mr. Tidewater Regional President welcomed the students and wished them the best of luck in their competitions. Finally Mr. Axley addressed the crowd welcoming the students, parents, and advisors to ocean lakes and gave some information on the events proceedings.

The competition began promptly after the general meeting. Students presented projects that they have been working on throughout the school year. Some of the most popular events were middle and high school Dragster Design, Essays on Technology, and Flight Endurance. The competition concluded with the presentation of awards. Students who placed in the top three at the regional fair will compete against other regional finalists from around the state in those events at Technosphere,

Mr. Axley, Mrs. Owens, and I are very appreciative of the many TSA advisors, volunteers, and judges that supported the event. Additionally, the Tidewater Regional Board and I would like to thank all the Tidewater TSA members and parents for coming out to the Virginia Beach for this event and good luck at Technosphere.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brett Fochtmann
This year at our Regional Fair we are having a silent auction to raise money for the state community service project, as we did last year.

For the silent auction, we have each officer from the Regional Council donate a few items to be auctioned off. Then at the Regional Fair, we set the items on tables and have a sheet of paper for each item where people place their names and bids.

Last year it was very successful! We raised $150 on just the silent auction and I'm sure we'll be able to raise even more this year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sydney Walker
Why We Have Regionals

As I was walking past a crowd of people at this year’s Valley Region Spring Fair, I overheard someone mutter:

“Why do we even have regionals?”

As a former Regional President, that was nearly blasphemous to me, but it’s a common question across TSA. In fact, many states don’t even have regions. State competition is the first and only level before Nationals. So I could hardly blame some anonymous person at my Regional Fair. But then I thought back on what Regionals meant to me and people I had met in my years in TSA.

The most obvious answer to that question is that Regionals allows more people to get involved successfully. From a competitive events standpoint, including a regional competition allows six times as many people to place in a competition. It also serves as a training ground for our competitors, allowing students to have even more opportunities to compete in a live competition environment, which pays off every year with the number of Virginians called up as finalists at the National Conference. Regions have the same effect on leadership, with six regional councils giving even more people the opportunity to be more than just members in TSA. Regional councils are also a home for people who are looking for leadership experience without the pressures of running at the state level, or as a springboard to higher office. I can personally testify that regional office is perhaps the best way to get the experience of being on an officer on council outside of state office (I started as a regional officer before running for states).

But the Valley Region Spring Fair means more to me than the start of my short-lived political career. As sappy as it sounds, that one day of insanity at Wilson Middle was a home to me. Regionals isn’t just the event before states; it’s an opportunity to meet people from close to home, and face off with them under the banner of competition. One of the best regional officers I had the pleasure to work with in my days on the regional council never attended states. But every year, she was there at Regionals. She competed and led, not as a springboard to states, but for the value of those things in themselves. Her example is one of many of people who love our regional fairs as the integral part of Virginia TSA that they are.

For all of these reasons, and more, it made me very proud to hear another voice from that crowd answer the question better than I ever could.

“Because, what would we do without it?”

Respectfully Submitted,

Caleb Hurst
Technology in Government and A Look Into the Public Sector’s Workplace

Have you ever thought of holding an office in the public sector, particularly government? I often do, and sometimes I wondered how TSA is going to help me get elected to an office of some sort. Sure, you get a lot of public speaking experience, but how are the competitions I’m doing going to get me into the legislature?

Due to a wonderful opportunity I had this past winter, I found out exactly how. I was selected to be a Senate Messenger for the Senate of Virginia. I got to see firsthand what the legislative process is like and how technology plays its role in Virginia’s General Assembly.

Most legislation these days is e-filed. It’s become a much more effective process than having to turn it into the desk. Voting is now run electronically, making it more accurate and quicker than a voice vote or a ballot vote. The General Assembly also runs a website, which has numerous resources ranging from things from school-related activities to an online bill-tracking section. Speaking of that, I can’t tell you how excellent that is. They’re updated practically the minute a change is made, and it makes everyone’s lives, especially at the GAB, much easier. Live video streams are run of session and some committee meetings. For all you video editors reading this, it’s actually pretty cool to watch some of the things they do to the video, if you can handle watching people talk about laws.

As I mentioned earlier, I was a Senate Messenger this past winter. And I have to admit, life skills I’d learned in TSA helped me tremendously. TSA helps you mature, be independent, have responsibility, and time management, all of which are very valuable in adult workplace. Another big help to me was the public speaking experience I’d learned through this organization. So, don’t forget these skills you’re learning once you enter the “real world”

Now for a little advertising! The Virginia Page Program is one of the best things you can do. All you middle schoolers, look into it. It’s been the best experience of my life. They’re amazing up on Capitol Square. You’ll learn skills there that will help you everywhere, including TSA! Conversely, TSA will help you everywhere, including your workplace.

Well, there you have it, a look into technology’s role in the government and what the public sector is like! If you have any questions about anything I’ve said, feel free to come find me at States.
Respectfully Submitted,
Erin Sullivan
GIS Update

When I ran for national office, a major section of my platform was dealing with college sponsorship, and more importantly, utilizing a connection I had made with the Washington College GIS Lab to provide a class on GIS for my local middle school in preparation for the now national middle school GIS event.

After spending another week working in the GIS lab in Chestertown, MD, I was ready to start teaching a group of students at our local middle school. Seven students met to learn how to use the computer system using a set of internet classes designed by Washington College. They learned at different speeds, but all had the opportunity to be exposed to a career with great opportunity. For many students who don’t have the option to learn GIS in a classroom setting, through the use of it ourselves, we have found it is a very viable possibility to learn GIS online, as long as you have the resources.

I want to thank Mr. Stewart Bruce from Washington College and his staff for being willing to share his resources and his commitment to the growth of the understanding of GIS. I also want to thank our county GIS department for sharing their expertise and database with our students. It was a great opportunity for me and the students that I have worked with.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kurtis Gross
TECHNOSPHERE

CHECKLIST:

The 2014 State Technosphere competition is just around the corner; project cramming sessions are being held, hotel rooms are being booked, campaign speeches are being written, and the prospect of Nationals is looming in every member’s mind. There are numerous items to consider at this point in the TSA year, and the chances are in favor of something being overlooked. There are ways to minimize the severity of this possible forgotten object, so you can focus on your project and not a missing binder or one too few button down shirts.

One of the best and most reliable ways to ensure you have everything you need for Technosphere is to create a traditional packing checklist. Use this list when packing for Technosphere, and when packing to return home. In addition to the conventional travel products, TSA has a list of its own. For most members, three sets of official attire would be appropriate for the weekend. Your TSA packing list should include white or blue shirts, grey pants or skirts, project supplies, the official tie, black dress shoes, clothing for traveling and possible down time, toiletries, any chargers for laptops or cell phones, and of course the customary navy blazer. Remember, image is an important factor of interviews and general sessions in which you are representing your chapter, so it is important that you look neat and confident.

The sole reason any member attends Technosphere is to compete with their projects. To forget your project is unthinkable, but often minor pieces of the project may be left behind. One way to avoid this calamity is to create a kit for any TSA emergency that may come your way. This kit might include copies of any video, word-processed document, or other computer file; blank CD’s, DVD-R’s, and flash drives; pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, and erasers; paper, sticky notes, and index cards; and any other miscellaneous item you might need for the weekend. With this kit, not only will you be prepared for any rough situation, but you can help out other members in distress. If you take care in packing so that you have absolutely everything you need, Technosphere can become a much less stressful weekend dedicated solely to competition.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica Strait
Each State Officer is assigned a specific job that they must complete over the course of the year. What was mine? This. These past four publications of the Virginia Scene have been the product of long (very) nights and a lot of technical problems. There was one edition where I had to completely start over making it because my brother spilled his drink all over my laptop and I had to go get a replacement. Ahhhh good times *rolls eyes*. So to the crazy kiddo that is striving to follow in my fabulous footsteps, be careful. Also, my goal was to make a newsletter that was not standard and was different than every previous year’s. I’m not the kind of girl to stick to a premade template. Yes, this created ten times more work for me, but if I’m the one who signed up for this job to represent Virginia TSA, why not make it awesome?! In fact, I was so excited and proud of being the new Virginia TSA State Reporter that right after Nationals, I created an extra edition of the Virginia Scene (that edition is the one I am most proud of). That special edition is where it all started. My idea was to stick with a theme for the newsletter with different changes in each edition. Obviously, I really liked the black background and shapes. When I took a look at some of the past year’s, I noticed that everything was made with a white background and it just all seemed very cookie-cutter to me. I hope that I have done my job to the best that I could have and I can’t wait to see what the next Virginia TSA Reporter can do! I bid the a farewell, Virginia Scene.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelsey Stoner
Upcoming Events

Technosphere 2014

- Held at the Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, VA
- May 2nd-4th, 2014

Nationals 2014

- Held at the Gaylord National in DC
- June 27th-July 1st, 2014