STUDENT LEADER

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www.scaleader.org

VA Takes NH

Our NASC Conference Adventure

By Gabbi Troia

The National Association of Student Councils (NASC) Conference is held annually in a state that is chosen based on the schools that apply to host the three-day event. This year, the NASC Conference was held in Derry, New Hampshire at the Pinkerton Academy from June 26–28.

Virginia's delegation to the conference departed on June 24 and arrived in New Hampshire exhausted from a 10-hour bus ride, but better acquainted with each other. The next morning, our group explored Boston, as it was a short drive away from the area of the conference. Though each school went their separate ways for the day, everyone was fascinated by the history and culture that the city held.

The conference began on Monday morning with a lively greeting right off the buses from the volunteer student guides at Pinkerton, then breakfast with the other states. We played a few icebreaker games, then headed off to learn about nonprofits, scholarships, and programs to bring back to our schools such as JROTC, Make-a-Wish, and Special Olympics, via the exhibits open in the Fieldhouse. After some networking, we attended the first general session, which kicked off with a dance party and strobe lights. We were welcomed by Headmaster Griffin Morse, Dr. Timothy Butterfield, and Ms. Jayne Ellspermann, then heard a lesson on learning to love and learning to ACT with the ALOHA Constellation from our keynote, Kevin Wanzer.

VSCA members traveled to New Hampshire in June to attend the annual National Association of Student Councils three-day conference.

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Breaking the Ice with New Members

A new school year inevitably brings new members for your organization. If you want to engage those members right away and make them feel like a part of the group, take some time to do some icebreakers and get-to-know-you activities at your first few meetings. You'll soon find the new folks fit right in and become active members.

Try some of these:

Two Minute Bonding

Similar to speed dating, in this activity people alternate partners every two minutes and try to learn as much as they can about the other person in two minutes. To begin, have everyone find a partner. Direct the pairs to form a big circle, with the inner circle facing their partner in the outer circle. Start the timer and give pairs two minutes to introduce themselves and start a conversation. Give a 15-second warning, then after two minutes have the inner circle move one person to the left. Continue until everyone has talked to everyone. A variation is to have conversation starters for each

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Back To School at Woodbridge Senior High

At the start of a new school year, we as leaders may find ourselves wondering what we can do to make the transition back to school easier, not only for ourselves, but also for our communities. At Woodbridge Senior High School (Region 4), we host a New Student Orientation to mitigate stresses associated with entering high school or moving and starting over in a new environment.

New Student Orientation is a half-day program that all our incoming students are invited to. The day starts off with the students and their families meeting in the auditorium for a welcome address from one of our Student Activities Leadership Council (SALC) Executive Chairs, as well as our principal. Then, our SALC Pride Executive Chair (overseeing school spirit-related activities and responsibilities) gives a speech that illustrates what our school spirit is like and how we value student involvement. To wrap up the introductions, we present a video created by our SCA and SALC students that encapsulates the lifestyle of a Woodbridge Senior High School student, to get students and their families excited to be a part of our community.

From the auditorium, the attendees are broken into smaller groups of 12–18 people and assigned a lead student tour guide (accompanied by an assistant tour guide and a tertiary tour guide) that gives them a walking tour of the school and provides information about the school past, present, educational, and extra-curricular. The groups then circle back to a classroom assigned to them, where everyone is provided with snacks and refreshments over a Q&A session with the guides. Afterwards, an icebreaker game is played with the attendees and the guides to help build relationships going into the year, as many new students look forward to seeing a friendly face on the first day of school. Examples of icebreakers we've used are beach ball questions (when a beach ball with questions about hobbies, interests, or personal background written on it is thrown from person to person, and everyone must answer a question), Two Truths and a Lie (everyone comes up with three statements about themselves; two are factual and one is not, and the group has to decide which they think is the lie), or "Something I Did This Summer" (when everyone around the room says one interesting thing they did over their break).

Once classroom time has concluded, students are brought into the gymnasium where we host a mock pep rally. Pride is something our school takes very seriously, and as we want everyone to feel like they are a part of it, we bring the spirit to them. During this time, students are in the stands cheering, competing, and building camaraderie. We break the students into four teams (one for each school color), and have the teams compete against each other in different games, similar to how the grade levels compete against each other at our Homecoming pep rally. Some of these games include the Human Spelling Bee (a group of students is given a poster each with a letter on it, and when ordered correctly, their letters will spell a word, but one student must unscramble them first—and faster than the other team), the Solo Cup Stack (students race each other in a relay with their teams to stack their cups in a pyramid), and the Toilet Paper Toss (each team has 90 seconds to throw as many loosely rolled toilet paper spools as possible into a hula hoop being held 20 feet away). Students leave this activity pumped up and excited for what our school spirit has in store down the road.

At the end of the pep rally, the group is lead to the cafeteria for a final activities fair, in which our school's sports, clubs, and specialty programs have displays, pamphlets, and sign up sheets to get our new students involved in extra-curriculars that boost morale and character. During this time, students and parents also get to participate in a meet-and-greet with teachers and admin.

The start of the school year is stressful for everyone—especially for those who are entering a whole new realm. Our school has found that the New Student Orientation is a great way to build relationships, alleviate worries, and plant a seed of excitement in incoming students, and we hope that you can try out some of the methods mentioned above in your own school.

Getting to Know Your Members (cont'd from p.1)

round where you have partners discuss a particular topic.

Name Bingo

Group members create a BINGO grid on a blank piece of paper, then get others to sign in the boxes, making sure to use names only once. All boxes must be signed. After all boxes have been signed, names of individuals are called. Players match them with those on their "card." The first person to get a BINGO with the names wins.

Never Have I Ever

Group members sit in a circle and take turns saying interesting things they have never done. Each player starts with 10 fingers showing. One by one, members make a statement of something they have never done, e.g., "Never have I ever been to Maine." Everyone who has done the stated thing must drop a finger. The goal is to be the last player with any fingers still showing.

Person Poem

In this one, each person writes a short poem about him- or herself, and then shares it with the group. The poem is to be at least four lines long, and must include the participant's name and some information about his or her personality, interests, occupation, lifestyle, etc. For example: "My hobby is golf/and my name is Ken Stone/I work in a bank/and I live all alone. Give 3–5 minutes to write the poems, then have each person read his or hers aloud.

Shoe Swap

Have everyone take off one shoe and place them in a pile on the floor. At a signal, each member grabs a shoe from the pile and finds the person whose shoe it is. When they find the person, they should introduce themselves and tell each other three little known facts about themselves. Once everyone has found their person, go around and have everyone introduce the person whose shoe they had and tell the three things about them.

Sentence Stems

Participants sit in a circle and each finishes the beginning of the sentence started by the leader. Anyone may pass at any time, if desired.

- "If I were a sign I would say ...
- "If I were an animal I would be ...
- "If I were a shoe I would be ...
- "Three words that describe me are ...
- "I feel best when people ...
- "I feel angry when ...
- "When I'm in a group, I usually ...
- "Someday I hope to be ...
- "My favorite daydream is ...

Freshman Fusion Welcome Event

By Jillian Doerr

An annual back to school activity that Grassfield High School promotes is our Freshman Fusion event. Every year, the rising freshmen from all of our feeder schools are invited to a day-long event that will get them comfortable with the transition to high school. There are ice breakers, skits, and tours around the school that will help the freshmen feel more at ease. There are also student-led discussions and a mock pep rally!

Grassfield's student council and class offices are the ones who plan and run the affair. Personally, my favorite part of the function is getting to talk to the freshmen one-on-one. Helping the new students get acquainted with our 'Grizzly Way' and showing them the ropes is a great feeling. When I was an anxiety-filled and awkward freshman, I walked into Freshman Fusion extremely nervous. After the day was over and my mom came to pick me back up, I did not want to leave! I ended up with a ton of new friends who helped me throughout my freshman year. I met people who would be in my classes, people I could sit with at lunch, and even a few of my future teachers!

I look forward to the many more Freshman Fusions GFHS gets to throw every year. It is a day full of learning, laughing, and good ole' Grizzly pride!

Save the Dates!

VSCA State Convention

March 16–18, 2018

Founders Inn, Virginia Beach

Join student leaders from around the state at our annual convention as we

Grow a Generation to Lead the Nation

Virginia Delegation Attends NASC Conference in NH (cont'd from p. 1)

Afterward, we swapped pins with other states and attended breakout sessions. Our officers—Derek Shockley, Jillian Doerr, and Gabbi Troia—attended State Officer Training lead by Phil Boyte, who gave a formula for success (relationships + trust + engage + courageous conversations = success), while allowing opportunities for inter-state networking. The evening concluded with the 2017 Parade of States, a powerful procession of student leaders representing their states at the national level. Our president, Derek Shockey, walked the Virginia flag across the stage for us!

Day two of the 2017 NASC Conference held general session number two, in which we heard our keynote, Natalie Panek, encourage lifelong learning through new experiences, changing interests, and setting goals. Her experience in the engineering industry allowed her to share the lessons she learned about pushing personal limits, accepting failure, and persevering. Afterwards, the NASC Annual Awards were presented to the Middle School and High School Principals of the year.

We attended more breakout sessions on teambuilding, community outreach, and infrastructure throughout the day, and then reconvened for the year's service project, Sole Hope. We partnered with people from other states and learned about their schools while we cut out plastic and denim patterns to send to Africa to be made into recycled shoes for children in order to prevent disease. Sole Hope is a charity that you can contribute to even at your own home—visit solehope.org for more information.

The evening consisted of a risk management special session put on by retired FBI agent Peter Murphy, a motivational speech from Ed Gerety on the principles of leadership, and a moving Illumination led by Paul Branagan that guided us to think inwardly about the people in our lives, the choices we make, and the reasons we do what we do. We were each given a silver and purple ribbon knotted together, that symbolizes a challenge. When that challenge is overcome, when we feel it is time, we will give one of the ribbons to the person who made that accomplishment possible. The evening was a reminder to appreciate the people who support you.

On our final day, we shared our favorite memories and reflected on the biggest ideas we were taking away from the conference. At our final general session, we heard from keynote Mike Smith, who enforced the idea that everyone must stand for something, and we should keep that mindset with us in everything we do. His experiences with philanthropic work made him realize that real change is made through other people, and his speech stressed the idea that we should lead through helping others—all in all, a wonderful way to bring the conference full circle.

Although we only spent three full days away from our homes in Virginia, the relationships we made with people from other states, the bonds we strengthened with our friends, and the skillsets we sharpened were so impactful, it is easy to say that the NASC Conference is a life-changing experience. Next year it will be held in Minnesota—we hope you'll join us!

VSCA delegates to the National Association of Student Councils annual conference attended general sessions, participated in breakout sessions, heard motivational speakers, and helped with the conference service project. Taking in the history and culture of nearby Boston also was part of the trip.