

Carmen (Madison) Cline, KY – 2017

“To whom much is given, much is expected.” Throughout my life, I have been awarded many privileges that have allowed me to further my education, and have motivated me to make an impact on the world. However, the biggest honor I have ever received is being selected to partake in the United States Senate Youth Program.

When I arrived in D.C., I had no idea what to expect. My high school never had a delegate, and I had never known anyone who participated. I quickly realized that I was surrounded by some of the most driven, intelligent kids in the nation. Although this was quite intimidating, I felt empowered to be a member of the group.

Hearing from so many speakers throughout the week not only inspired me to work more diligently, but reminded me that our leaders are all humans working towards common goals. Before the program, I was almost intolerant to those with opposing views. I believed that most educated people leaned Democratic; however, I was quickly proven otherwise. The people that I met identified with all different sides of the political spectrum. There were people who leaned extremely left and right, and everywhere in between. More importantly, I was able to have respectful conversations with everyone, and no one was shut down or alienated for what they believed in.

As the program approached a close, the surrealism of the whole situation had not gone. I had never been around so many beautiful people in my life, or so I thought. A fellow delegate reminded me of something that will stick with me forever, and this was that there is no “cream of the crop,” but that every person is amazing. After this program, I have started to look at people for who they are, not what they believe, or how smart they are. I have gained respect for everyone, especially those who do not agree with me. Most importantly, I have realized that along with the prestigious honor of being selected to this program, comes an expectation to be the best version of myself as possible.

There are many more than 104 juniors in America who deserve to be a part of the program, and it is our obligation as delegates to advocate for the many things we learned during Washington Week. I am so thankful to have had the chance to participate in this program. I have made lifelong friendships that I value very much.

“To whom much is given, much is expected.” I am so thankful to be a part of something that challenges me to hold myself accountable, and I know that the 55th annual USSYP class will make our world a better place.