

The civic excursion

Local students among those to attend inauguration

By Alison Henderson

News Graphic Staff

OZAUKEE COUNTY — Ella Hoerchner, from the the town of Cedarburg, was one of two Ozaukee County youth to attend the 58th U.S. Presidential Inauguration Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C., through the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Citizenship Washington Focus – Presidential Inauguration program.

Thirty-one youth from Wisconsin 4-H represented the state in a group of approximately 500 young people ages 14 to 18 from across the country as part of a week-long educational experience aimed at developing civic understanding and engagement.

Aside from participating in Inauguration Day activities, the youth visited monuments including the Lincoln, Jefferson and Franklin D. Roosevelt memorials and the Newseum, an interactive museum focused on the history of the First Amendment.

“It was such an amazing experience to witness an inauguration and be in the Washington, D.C., area learning about and touring the monuments and museums,” Hoerchner said in a press release. “Throughout the week I learned more about the democratic and the electoral processes along with other facts about our nation’s capital.”

The Wisconsin delegation also visited the National Archives, where they saw the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Alaina Knier from Grafton said this 4-H opportunity was special because all of the lessons they were learning, they were also experiencing all around them.

Before attending the inauguration, participants held mock campaigns, elections and discussion groups on issues facing the country today. They also engaged in a day of community service, developing work skills while assisting individuals and organizations.

The networking skills that young people gained during the week will help them address youth needs in their communities and state following the program.

Brianna Stapleton Welch, also from Cedarburg, chaperoned the trip as an adult adviser. Welch said it was a great experience overall, as the 4-H youth were respectful and engaged participants throughout the trip.

“This nonpartisan event is focused on providing an immersive learning experience where teens have the opportunity to attend the inauguration and participate in sessions and activities focused on exploring the history of the presidency, the election process and the role of the press,” Welch said. “Events like Citizenship Washington Focus empower the next generation of leaders to exchange ideas, practice respect and form friendships with other youth from diverse backgrounds and increase individual commitment to citizen involvement.”

Wisconsin 4-H, part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, hosts three other summer Citizenship Washington Focus Program educational travel experiences to Washington, D.C., annually. This is the first year that an inauguration-related program has been offered by the National 4-H Council.

“Experiencing such a controversial time in our nation’s history was something that I really loved to experience, and I would defiantly go again,” Knier said. “I think it is so important, especially for people my age, to experience all of the viewpoints that occur in our country.”

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Cedarburg's Ella Hoerchner is pictured with the U.S. Capitol in the background.



The Wisconsin 4-H delegation numbered 31 at the presidential inauguration last month.

Submitted photos