

Ready to roll at the polls

Students gain election experience, offer advice to first-time voters

By Audrey McKinney
Festus High School

Two seniors at Festus High School got an up-close view of voting during the Aug. 7 Primary Election.

Both were volunteers at the polls, recruited through a project organized by the Jefferson County Clerk's Office. The school's National Honor Society chapter offered the duty as a means to obtain service hours and several FHS students volunteered.

Hannah Minx's tasks during the primary consisted of greeting voters, directing them to the right location and collecting finished ballots.

Minx said she was surprised by the number of "newbie" voters she observed.

"I did see more (people 21 and younger) than I expected. I could tell that

some were first-time voters as they followed their parents around and listened to their instructions."

She said the assistance appeared to be a good idea.

"I think that it helped them (first-time voters) a lot," Minx said. "They didn't seem as confused, but instead felt comfortable with their environment and what they were about to do. I would most definitely bring one of my parents with me to help me feel more comfortable and clear minded."

Minx also advises young voters to know who they are voting for before they arrive at their polling place. She is 17 and has not yet registered to vote.



Allison Kuykendall



Hannah Minx

She said her own experience was illuminating and she encourages teens who are too young to vote to volunteer at a polling place, as well.

Festus senior Allison Kuykendall was also on duty as a volunteer on Aug. 7.

Her responsibilities included scanning driver's licenses for voters, making sure all information was correct, and handing voters the ballot of their choice.

She said she learned something valuable: People who want to vote need to bring identification.

"If I had gone in to vote for the first time or even the second time, I'd have been completely overwhelmed," she said.

She believes voting is an important privilege.

"I think it's a good thing to do and more people my age should vote because it gives us a voice," Kuykendall said.

The Washington Post reports that, according to the Harvard Institute of Politics, only about 30 percent of voters under the age of 30 will vote in the Nov. 6 General Election.

Kuykendall believes this needs to change.

"I think that younger people need to take voting more seriously and be informed on it. I think that we should always have a say and voice in the matter instead of a huge majority of our elders who vote.

"I think that they can sometimes see things in an old-fashioned way and the modern and younger voices are not being expressed because we aren't voting."

No free lunch

There were no frills for R-7 junior who campaigned for McCaskill

By Sundus Malik
Jefferson High School

Summer – a time when most teens choose to spend time with friends, get a summer job at the pool or lie on the sofa.

Not Jefferson High School junior Peyton Kidkul, however. After receiving an email from the Claire McCaskill campaign, he decided to become a full-time campaign volunteer.

"I thought that, hey, if I helped her campaign, I would be helping someone I agree with get into office, as well as getting experience, and so I went," Kidkul said.

He describes the application process to become a volunteer to be similar to a job interview.

"They had a series of questions and essays (to write). What issues you agree with, what issues are most important to you, will you try your best to help the campaign, etc. Then you submit it to a regional director and they'll give you a call."

After Kidkul was selected, he received confidential packets and information regarding the campaign.

He immediately began his job of canvassing voters at their front doors. His day-to-day work included traveling

to various neighborhoods and speaking to the people he met about McCaskill's campaign.

On an average day, Kidkul would visit the campaign office in Arnold, grab a packet of handouts, and try to visit five or so neighborhoods in a seven-hour shift. These tasks became especially difficult when the summer heat and distance to travel became greater.

Kidkul said there were downsides to the job.

He had to cover the costs for his fuel, didn't get breaks or even a free lunch. But, he said, he enjoyed his experience overall and learned some valuable lessons.

For example, canvassing is not fun.

"I know I'm not going to canvass for myself, unless I have to," Kidkul said. "I gained experience, and (got) to know people."

After about a month, Kidkul decided to give up the canvassing work and there were not other tasks available to him, so he dropped out of the campaign.

But Kidkul believes he will serve again as a campaign volunteer and continues to support McCaskill.

In fact, someday he plans to become a politician himself and believes his summer work was a good step toward learning the basics of running a campaign.



Peyton Kidkul

What I learned working at the polls

By Reagan Mullins
Fox High School

Have you ever wondered what happens behind the scenes at polling places? I got the chance to find out firsthand on election day.

For the Aug. 7 Primary Election, I and many other students from Jefferson County took part in the Youth Election Participation Program that enables area teens to volunteer at the local polls. Jefferson County Clerk Randy Holman created the program to encourage young people's participation in local elections and politics, and county schools were happy to nominate students.

Teens representing many of the schools in the area attended a brief training session at the county clerk's office. We learned what would be expected of us at the polling places and how to use the office's technology to look up voter information.

Since we were not official poll workers, we weren't allowed to pass out ballots, but we did organize and count them to get them ready for the poll workers. It was such a good experience

for me. I spent the morning learning about the voting process and got to see how democracy really works.

I also learned that while I have very little personal interest in politics, I understand the importance of being informed and I plan to exercise my right to vote at every opportunity.

Teens can get involved in upcoming elections by finding out if their school participates in the Youth Election Participation Program. They can register to vote at age 17 1/2, provided they will be 18 by election day.

The last day to register for the April 2019 election is March 6; voters must complete a voter registration application to the local election authority either by mail or in person. In-person voter registration is available at state licensing offices, public libraries and the county clerk's office in Hillsboro.



Will you vote the same way your parents vote?

"I am going to vote the same as my parents. I trust the logic of my parents. They have decent knowledge of what each poll is for and are more inclined (to pay attention), due to the fact that it may affect their lives. I do not care for (politics) that much. (My parents know) what all it entails and that I trust their opinions."

(Reported by Haley Worth,
Hillsboro High School)

Logan Hendrix, 18
Hillsboro

