

## JACOB'S LOG:

# Expect the unexpected

By Jacob Brooks

**N**ever jump off of a ladder into a pile of leaves and expect a soft landing. Chances are you will break your arm. You'll go to the hospital and get stuck with a bright pink cast, and the other fourth graders will make fun of you almost every day.

Never put a flame next to a hay bale and expect it not to burn. It will. Your grandma will freak out. Your brother will laugh. You will singe your arm hair and set your father's hay field on fire. You'll hear your dad use some colorful language.

These were not the experiences I had on the Washington Youth Tour last June, but they are experiences that teach a common lesson, one that was reinforced on my trip to Washington. That lesson is: Expect the unexpected.

I rode that chartered bus headed to Washington D.C. with over 40 people that I hardly knew. I had no idea what was going to happen. I assumed it would be just a long, boring trip. I thought that when it was all over, saying good-bye was going to be easy. I should have known to expect the unexpected.

As it turned out, it was on that trip that I made great friends, shared great laughs and learned valuable lessons. At the National Archives, I remember distinctly staring down at the words of the Declaration of Independence thinking, "Wow! This is it! Right before me is the essence of our forefathers' handiwork—the very foundation that gave birth to this great nation." In that moment, I realized the capability that all of we Americans carry within us: the capability to believe, to take a stand, and most importantly to change the world.

When I read the words of that historic document, I felt a sense of pride, but more importantly, a sense of responsibility.

I realized while spending the week in our nation's capitol that I had been given a great opportunity, but I had honestly not known how to use it. As an American, I possess the freedom of speech. I am given the opportunity, privilege and right to let my voice be heard. It was through the Youth Tour that I was taught the power of not only my voice, but our collective voice.



The most important lesson from the Youth Tour came when I sat sleep-deprived on stage behind the keynote speaker, Mike Schlappi, an Olympic gold medal winner in men's wheelchair basketball. These words of his stuck with me: "I thank God for pain, because only through pain do we change, and only through change do we grow."

I never expected that I would hear something that made such a phenomenal difference in my life. I should have expected the unexpected.

I can remember my first day of high school and how I was faced with change. Through that change I was able to grow from cautious to confident.

I remember how this nation went through pain on the day of September 11, 2001. I remember how that pain gave this nation a desire to change, and I remember how in that time of change we grew strong as patriots and as a nation.

Now, I do expect the unexpected. 🗣️

*Jacob Brooks, a senior at Allegheny High School, was sponsored by Blue Ridge Electric on the 2009 Youth Tour to Washington. He was elected by all delegates there as the national spokesperson for the electric cooperatives' Youth Leadership Council.*



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