

CHANCE OF A LIFETIME



Coventry's Julie Lima-Boyle was named 2012's R.I. Teacher of the Year, an honor that earned her a trip to Washington, D.C. and some face time with President Barack Obama in April. Inside, she reflects on her trip to the capital and her time meeting the president.

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Top teacher reflects on meeting President

JULIE LIMA BOYLE
Coventry HS
2012 RI Teacher of the Year

A few years ago, I read an article about a team of scholars in England working to locate and verify Shakespeare's fingerprints and manuscripts he likely held. What captured my imagination most about the article had less to do with my true love for Will Shakespeare and more to do with the idea of lasting impressions and the interconnectedness of people and things through time. My dad had recently passed away and his loss likely inspired this jag of reflection then.

As I work now to assemble words to describe my recent

trip of a lifetime to Washington, D.C., as the 2012 RI Teacher of the Year, I find myself once again thinking about fingerprints.

The week of events in Washington was FULL and offered a great mix of working sessions and celebratory events. All of the ToYs from each state and the U.S. territories gathered for our conference from April 20-27, staying at a hotel just two doors down from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. During the week, we became Smithsonian teacher ambassadors, met with Dr. Biden at the Vice-President's residence, met with our local senators at the Capitol Building, worked with education lobbyists and served as one at

the U.S. Department of Education, participated in SMART technology training, recorded public service announcements, co-authored a book of advice for new teachers, attended a gala reception at the Institute of Peace overlooking the Lincoln Memorial, and, oh yeah, met President Obama at the White House for some one on-one-time and a ceremony to announce the 2012 national ToY!

Each activity was stimulating in its own right, but, of course, the highlight of the week was the time spent at the White House. After passing through numerous layers of security screening, ToYs were escorted by Marines into the Dining Hall of the White House to line up to meet President Obama, after which each teacher would proceed to the East Room for the ceremony. As I awaited my time to meet the President, I honestly felt the very real honor pressing upon me of representing the great RI teachers I know and the many I do not. I am normally emotional (just ask my students- I still cry every time Gregor Samsa dies in "The Metamorphosis" despite having read the text forty times), but my feelings were markedly so that sunny morning. I know that I merely represent hard-working, dedicated teachers of our state- we are the norm, not the exception- and here I am about to meet the President of the USA! I stood under the famous portrait of Lincoln and touched the prayer inscribed by John Adams in the mantle of the fireplace. And then I thought of the legacy of fingerprints in that room alone of the White House.



Submitted Photo

Coventry High teacher Julie Lima-Boyle, the state's 2012 Teacher of the Year, had the opportunity to meet President Obama in April.

Stepping towards the President to shake his hand, I looked down at my own hand, wearing my father's watch on my wrist, and proudly greeted Obama on behalf of RI educators. I thought how my dad fought in Korea and was a real American hero and here I am meeting the President?! I thought of all my students back home who were so excited for my visit to the White House. I thought about my hand with THE President's fingerprints on it, and then I remembered that fingerprints go both ways when shaking hands. The President asked if there was anything I would like him to know. I said, "Yes, Mr. President." Then I told him that teachers generally feel like a bruised lot these past several years and that we "need a champion in the White House, at the US

DoE, in our state leadership and in our communities who will raise up teachers."

I did my best to leave a positive and enduring impression in D.C. on behalf of RI teachers, our students, my dad and myself! This trip and serving as RI ToY has certainly left an indelible mark on my career and my life. As teachers, we everyday leave a figurative trace of our fingerprints on students and the world.

Likewise, our students shape and influence our lives and identities. We should take pride in the thought that, years hence, forensic specialists can point to people not paper for our legacy.

An English teacher at Coventry High School and its English Curriculum Coordinator, Julie Lima-Boyle was 2012's Rhode Island Teacher of the Year.

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