

D.C. makes big impression on CHS student

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COVENTRY — Going to an academic summer program was not going to be an option this year for rising Coventry High School Senior Samantha Cannon, 17, she said.

As a young woman with high aspirations — studying law, political science, history and eventually being president of the United States — it was difficult to rule out the summer programs offered by universities across the country because of cost, Cannon said.

This all changed when her history teacher, Lisa Johansen, told her about the Congressional Academy and encouraged her to apply this spring, she said.

The academy, developed by the Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs at Ashland University, gives students a primary-source and on-site view into the American Founding, the Civil War and

the civil rights movement. Students spend two weeks in Washington, D.C., and leave with three college credits. Best of all, it's free and travel expenses are covered, according to a release from Ashland.

There were only spots for two students per state, but Cannon gave it her best shot anyways and filled out the lengthy application that required a list of all her leadership experience, her academic background, school activities and a personal statement about why she wanted to go, she said.

The application was due on April 1 and Cannon got the letter of acceptance two weeks later.

"I was so excited," she recalls. "I couldn't even believe that I was going to Washington, D.C."

On June 28, Cannon left for Washington and if she had any doubt about going into politics it was banished during the next two weeks that followed, she

said.

Her days started with two morning lectures and the afternoons were spent at different sites throughout the capitol, like the National Mall, the Smithsonian or the Capitol Building.

There were 101 other students in attendance for those weeks, Cannon said, and one of the things that made the biggest impression on her was getting to know her classmates.

"I met so many interesting people from all around the country," she said. "Being from little Rhode Island, it was interesting to see how different people are from other parts of the country. It's amazing how we can be so different and still be one."

She had studied some of the founding documents before, Cannon said, in history class. So the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were not completely foreign to her.

But the way that they were taught at

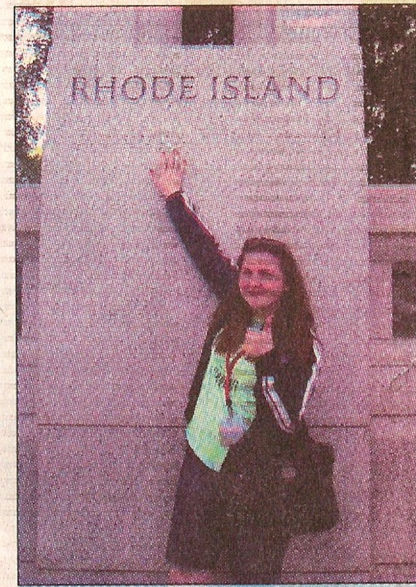
the academy was completely new, she said.

"I really liked learning about all the founding parties — like the Federalists. It was really interesting how [the academy] taught it because in school American history is different. This was more the political science side of the history. It was the story of how our country came to be founded and it was more philosophical."

She really enjoyed studying the Declaration and the Constitution, Cannon said.

"After that week I definitely decided that this is what I want to do, this is my passion in life," she said. "Last year I wanted to be a neurologist, but I didn't enjoy chemistry and biology. I have really enjoyed history throughout my life. Now that I have had this experience, I am even more sure of it."

See TRIP, Page A-6



Submitted Photo

Samantha Cannon visited many of the sights while in Washington, D.C., including the World War II Memorial.

Trip reinforces CHS student's excitement to get into politics

Continued from Page A-1

The trip centered on study of the Declaration, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, according to Ashland. Students spent most of their time in D. C. but also ventured out on daytrips to historic Philadelphia and Gettysburg.

She didn't make it through the trip, Cannon said amusingly, without a couple small incidents — like setting off the whole alarm system at historic Mount Vernon when she got a little too close to the subject of a photograph.

Since coming home on July

10, Cannon has formed a few resolutions for the coming year. One is to join the Mock Trial team at Coventry High School, she said. Another is to intern in Johansen's classroom.

"I'll be helping her put together some lesson plans, talking about my experience [at the academy], helping other students have a better interest in history and hopefully getting them interested in our country and how it is running."

The opportunity was amazing, Cannon said and "I would love to thank everyone who was involved with the program for such a great opportu-

nity. I learned so many things that I couldn't really comprehend before because I hadn't really been exposed to them. I loved all the places we went. It was a great program and anyone who is interested in history or political science should definitely apply."

The program is open annually to two juniors from each state, according to Ashland. More information and the application are available at www.congressionalacademy.org.

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