



## *Governor Katie Mossburg welcomes 2016 RGS citizens*

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to Wheeling Jesuit University for the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of West Virginia Rhododendron Girls State Program.

This upcoming week has the potential to alter your perspective and change the rest of your life if you choose to let it.

By being selected to attend Girls State, you have been given a great privilege and the opportunity to learn, not only from all of your classes, but also from your fellow counselors and classes, but also from all over the state this week and you will connect with so many girls that, like you, are about to embark on their final year of high school and soon start a new chapter in their lives.

In the next few days, you will get the chance to gain a deeper understanding of how our government functions and to recognize the ultimate sacrifice which our servicemen and women make

on our behalf daily.

I encourage you to take what you will learn here to ensure you are a part of the upcoming generation of strong, powerful female leaders that is being fostered in environments like this.

Since you are lucky to be exceptionally gifted in an era with so many paths for women that have been created by those who were groundbreakers before us.

I hope you will let this week inspire you to continue their work and create an even brighter future.

Above all else, keep an open mind about the chances presented to you throughout the week and be thankful in the end for everyone who was a part of your experience.

You would not be here without countless people who have cared for you, encouraged you, and worked to ensure your success, not only in this week, but in the rest of your life as well.

I am incredibly humbled and grateful to get to be a part of your week here and I am

excited to learn from you. Please do not hesitate to approach me with any questions, concerns, or even if you just need someone to talk to. It would be my pleasure. Good Luck!



**Katie Mossburg  
2015 RGS  
Governor**

### GIRLS STATE SONGS

For she's a Girls State girl  
and a girl you ought to know

For she's a Girls State girl not  
too fast and not too slow

She's a scholar and a lady and  
a girl that men adore

And every time you meet her  
you want to meet her more

For she's a Girls State girl  
and a girl you ought to -

A girl you ought to - a girl  
you ought to know



## *Dept. President Wade says: 'Participate'*

Welcome to the 74<sup>th</sup> year of our American Auxiliary Girls State Program!

The American Legion Auxiliary is the largest Women's Patriotic Organization in the Country!

It is my honor for all of you to represent your schools in this outstanding Program! I hope all of you come with an open mind and soak in as much wisdom as you can. The program this week will be very rewarding of you participate in your community, make new friends that can last a lifetime, and be open to learn about how our government works.

I hope all those that are interested will run for an office. If you can't see yourself doing so, then help others learn how the process works. All of you will be of voting age in the near future and you will learn how that system works. I hope all of you take advantage of the many different programs and the meanings behind them.

We honor all those that have served our Country, past, present, and future. The sacrifices have been great and because of those men and women, we have our freedom!!

This week will go fast, so enjoy, have fun, and make memories that will last forever!



**Susan Wade, Dept. President,  
ALA, Dept. of WV, 2015-2016**

A man without a Girls State  
is like a ship without a sail;

It's like a boat without a rudder;  
It's like a fish without a tail.

A man without a Girls State  
is like a raft upon the sand,

There's only one thing worse  
in this universe, and that's a  
Girls State, I said a Girls  
State, I mean a Girls State  
without a man!!!

HISTORY OF  
RHODODENDRON  
GIRLS STATE

Rhododendron Girls State was started in 1941 under the sponsorship and direction of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of West Virginia.

Boys State had been started two years earlier by The American Legion.

The first Girls State program started in Illinois and we were one of the pioneers in a citizenship training program for girls.

The program and organization were incorporated under the laws of West Virginia.

A Board of Directors and an Executive Board establishes policies, supervises its direction and promotes its continuance.

Mrs. R.E. Warman of Morgantown was named the first director and with Auxiliary volunteers initiated the program that you will enjoy this week.

Mrs. Warman had been both a Department President and a National Vice President of the Auxiliary.

More than 26,000 have benefited from its training and the annual numbers have grown from 156 to 400 and above.

## *Department Commander Smith*

Kenneth Smith was born in the Barboursville area of Cabell County, West Virginia. He graduated from Barboursville High School in 1960 and enlisted in the



**Kenneth E. Smith, Department Commander, The American Legion, Department of WV, 2015-2016**

United States Air Force when he turned 18. He was assigned to the Atlas "F" inter-continental Missile Squadrons in Atlas, Oklahoma and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Kenneth returned home in 1964, using his GI bill for further education benefits and began working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Huntington, WV.

He was temporarily assigned to the Marshall Space Center in Huntsville, Alabama and also performed field recovery operations for FMEA after natural disasters destroyed several regions across America. He retired from the Federal government service in 1998.

He is an American Legion Paid Up for life member of Barboursville Post 177 and has served the organization at each of the Post, District, Department and National levels on various commit-

tees and offices. He has been serving as the State of WV Department Commander since July 2015 while also serving on the National Security council.

He volunteers his time at the Huntington VA Medical Center in the Palliative Care Section. He is a treasurer for the Sons of the American Revolution in the General Andrew Lewis chapter in Huntington, WV and serves as a Board of Management member on the society's state level.

He is active in the operation of the Huntington Hub of Honor Flight to provide free transportation to Washington, DC for veterans to visit the war memorials.

Kenneth and his wife Charlena reside in Barboursville and are the parents of Becky, Phillip, and Nancy. Their grandchildren are Justina, Alexandria, and Dakota.

## *Director Sirbaugh says: 'Welcome Citizens!'*

Welcome citizens!

Congratulations on being selected to the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the Rhododendron Girls State! You are among the elite group of outstanding young ladies across our beautiful state that have been chosen by your school and community because of your character, leadership, scholastic achievement, and your love for your country.

Our weeklong program is built around educating our citizens on city, county, and state government through educational classes and mock elections. In addition, various elective classes, such as leadership and citizenship, enhance our program in hope that you gain an understanding and appreciation for your role as a United States citizen. The week also includes several fun activities for all to enjoy. As a former Rhododendron Girls State

Alumnae, I promise that if you take an active part in this week's activities and open yourself up to new experiences, challenges, and opportunities: not only will you have a successful and enjoyable week; you will also establish many new and lasting friendships.

Our theme this year is "Rise UP! Be Your Best You!" There is nothing that will stand in your way of being your "best you" except you. Each of you have the world at your feet and your opportunities are limitless. Do not be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone. Your strong character and values, along with high self-esteem and confidence, will enable you to achieve all your dreams.

In closing, please remember our Veterans who proudly and unselfishly wear, or have worn, our Nations uniform to defend the

freedoms and liberties that we very often take for granted. Freedom is never free. Be mindful of our Veterans and let them know their sacrifice is appreciated!

Best of luck to each of you!



**Michelle R. Sirbaugh, Director**



## *Dr. Thomas says: 'Welcome & enjoy!'*

Welcome to what can and will be one of the best weeks of your life.

Rhododendron Girls State is about citizenship, leadership and patriotism.

It provides many of the best and brightest young women of West Virginia with opportunities to learn and grow.

The experiences and the friendships

**Dr. Rosemary M. Thomas, Ed.D.,  
Assistant Director.**

will last a lifetime.

Thirty years ago I was honored to find myself where you are now and I can say without hesitation that it helped me become the person I am today.

It is a privilege to serve as your assistant director and I look forward to meeting you and working with you throughout the week.

I am certain this will be an amazing session.

Welcome and enjoy!