

What Girls' State Means to Meet - *Forever in my Heart*

When I look back at when I first got here, the uncertainty I felt for the experience and week that lay ahead. I had mixed emotions. The first town meeting in our common room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Despite how much we thought we were all different, we had that much more in common. This experience has been very good for me, as well as all my fellow town friends, we will never forget. I've been pushed to personal limits emotionally and intellectually; I thought I wasn't capable of achieving. I had many rough edges on me inside and out; however, I feel the buffering of all that represents and makes up Girls' State and has helped to smooth out some of that roughness. The abilities I possessed before have been improved in ways I'm sure I'll be able to pin point in the short and long-term future that lays ahead for me. I laugh when I think about how silly I felt when I first got here and proudly smile now when I see how far we have come as one. Thank you to all that helped to get me here and believed.

Sydney Underhill-Tilton

2017 Dirigo Girls' State Citizen from the Town of Humility

Student at Richmond High School, Richmond ME

Sponsored by Emerson-Lane ALA Unit #132, Richmond ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

What Girls' State means to me is a fun opportunity to learn how government works and how we elect our state's governor, representatives and senators. We also learned about town meetings and town budgets. We learned about voting and how to be aware of who you are voting for. We voted in primary and general elections. The primaries were elections within our party, Federalists, Nationalists or Populists and then we voted in the general election. We also got to listen to many speakers like Senator Angus King and Governor LePage. You can also show off your talent at Girls' State. We do a lot during the week. Girls' State is a wonderful opportunity to meet people and make new friends. Girls' State is an opportunity to learn about government and have fun at the same time!

Angel Hall- Stuart

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Liberty

Student at Erskine Academy, South China ME

Sponsored by Washburn-Brann-Ward ALA Unit #195, South China ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address called on all Americans to, "*ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.*" These immortal words inspire me to be an effective leader and Girls' State is showing me how.

Dirigo Girls' State empowers me to be an active leader in furthering the work of our great society, by reinforcing our American tradition. I have come to appreciate the sacrifices others have made so they can be heard, have equal opportunity and have suffrage. My honored veteran, Jeri Crays, answered President Kennedy's call to service in order to preserve my rights. Now it is my turn.

Throughout this week I have dug deeper into the democratic process, I have learned about local government. Good government needs to be organized with fair and effective meetings and elections. In order for this to happen local government needs effective leaders, who we have the power to elect through informed votes.

This opportunity will serve as a reference and a reminder throughout my life that freedom isn't free or easy. It takes hard work, collaboration, respect for others, sacrifice, and leadership. Girls' State teaches me to be an effective leader one needs to bring to pass effective government.

Anya Fegel

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Hope

Student at Messalonskee High School, Oakland ME

Sponsored by Decker – Simmons ALA Unit #51, Oakland ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

The Dirigo Girls' State seminar to me is an opportunity to become more acquainted with our democratic process and civil responsibility while also learning about the importance of participation; especially as a new generation of young people.

This has benefited me in a few ways. First of all, I am turning 18 in August and I will be able to vote for our next governor. Our many speakers have given us first hand accounts on how our voting is extremely necessary to the democratic process and if we, as the next generation, do not participate, we leave our fate in the hands of other people who we may or may not trust.

Second of all, as someone who does not have clear future plans but has taken some interest in business/politics, I find this program an important part of my political education. I have not yet taken a course in political science at my school but here, I can be more informed through role-playing and presentation.

Lastly, Dirigo Girls' State presents us with opportunities to come out of our shells. Never in a million years would I have run for any government position in school or otherwise, and here I have campaigned to be a senator. So I must thank Dirigo Girls' State for this experience and education for it will greatly aid me in my knowledge and confidence if I ever decide to enter a career in government and politics.

Sarah Mariski

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Friendship

Student at The Maine Girls Academy, Portland ME

Sponsored by VFW Post 6859, Portland ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

My name is Mya Letourneau and I am going into my senior year at Lewiston High School in Maine. I was selected to be the only girl from my high school to attend this year's 2017 Maine Girls' State and it was one of the best things that could have happened to me at this point in my life. I was presented with the paperwork for Girls' State with no knowledge of what was to come. I had never heard of this program before and even almost did not attend because I am a very shy and introverted person. Since that time, I have learned that Girls' State is an extraordinary privilege that I am so grateful to have been a part of. This was an amazing opportunity that I have the chance to take part in and I plan on opening that same opportunity to more students at Lewiston High School. My school only sent one boy and one girl to this year's Boys' and Girls' States. I plan on talking to high school administrators and advising them to send more girls to experience this and to talk to the upcoming juniors to educate them about Girls' State and how important it has been to me and can be to them. Girls' State has already broken me out of my shell and introduced me to new people that I will keep in my heart forever.

Mya Letourneau

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Happiness

Student at Lewiston High School, Lewiston ME

Sponsored by Lewiston High School

What Girls' State Means To Me

In the beginning I wouldn't have been able to say what Girls' State meant to me. I came into this week not expecting anything or to feel changed as a person by the end. I never in a million years thought Girls' State would mean so much to me that I'd want to share my experience with everyone around me.

I believe the Girls' State experience is one that leaves you unable to really put into words. One where strong young women get the chance to band together with other strong women from across the state of Maine. You are given the chance to meet these girls, a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet so many intelligent, beautiful, and diverse girls. By being given this week with these amazing young women we are able to build each other up and support each other not only for this week but, for the rest of our lives. The friends you make here are the ones that last a lifetime. I think it is safe to say that those who attended Girls' State are changed by their experience here.

Morgan Dalton

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Charity

Student at Spruce Mountain High School, Jay ME

Sponsored by George Bunton ALA Unit#10, Livermore Falls ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

In the most basic definition, Girls' State provides young ladies with the opportunity to live together and learn about how the U.S. Government functions, while exploring political positions and procedures. However, this is only a general assessment of the week. Each delegate is provided with the same experience, but how they shape it themselves, what activities they choose to participate in, is what ultimately creates its significance.

For myself, Girls' State has been a week of opportunity, love and stability. The atmosphere is infused with high energy that enlightens all spirits and composes passion. Each delegate creates special bonds and gains support from other women through various activities that grant opportunities for expression and discussion, free of hate, judgment and discrimination. This may not be obtainable in a regular school setting and this is why Girls' State is so unique.

Girls' State fashions young ladies that are fearless, outspoken, and have desire for public change. The fast paced setting instills drive, builds quick connections, and at its most bare provides opportunity for growth. The opportunity is like no other...

Maria Maximic

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Charity

Student at Brewer High School, Brewer ME

Sponsored by Brewer High School

What Girls' State Means to Me

To me, Girls' State I about more than what we are here for. In these past few days, I have laughed until I cried and smiled until my face hurt and have seen so much love and support from everyone here. Girls' State is about bringing us, as young, strong willed women together. It is about making friendships that will last a lifetime.

Before this week, because I am not 18 yet and can't vote, I haven't invested much time in politics. This week has shown me the importance more than ever before that being involved in politics and voting is extremely important. This week makes me want to step up and educate myself more about current events and the things around me and has inspired me to find the time to invest myself in politics.

I have seen so many girls with so much potential and I think that there is a future governor of Maine and even president among us. We are ALL capable of achieving great things!

Being in the town of Happiness is a perfect fit for me and the rest of my townspeople. I could not be with a more supportive and genuinely happy group of young women. I am honored to be here and I will cherish this experience forever.

Madison Damon

2017 Dirigo Girls' State Citizen from the Town of Happiness

Student at Westbrook High School, Westbrook ME

Sponsored by Westbrook High School

What Girls' State Means to Me

Girls' State stands for many different things to many different people. To me Girls' State is about more than the politics or the speakers, it is about the relationships formed. Let me make this clear, I had no intention to make friends at Girls' State. Let me also make this clear, making friends at Girls' State is inevitable.

At this point in the week I realize I wouldn't want it any other way. I've had this amazing opportunity to meet people from all over the state of Maine. I now not only have connection as far west as Oxford Hills, but all the way up to Caribou and even in Augusta! I have friends that I can message about my accomplishments and failures in the future and people that I can call up and feel completely comfortable talking to them. All of these relationships were formed in less than a week. All of these relationships are going to last more than a week. Girls' State is about making relationships that will aid us in our campaigns this week, but also in our bright futures.

Lauren Roberts

**2017 Dirigo Girls' State Citizen from the Town of Hope
Student at Nokomis Regional High School, Newport ME
Sponsored by Nokomis High School**

What Girls' State Means to Me

Girls' State is a program inspiring young women to take risks and to try something new. The program is designed to teach females how to play powerful roles in government, as well as educating youth in the areas of politics and women empowerment.

Girls' State helped me learn how to stand my ground and fight for what I believe is right. Girls' State's focus is courage and honesty. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone.

At Girls' State, we are tested by both staff and peers to talk about local and national politics and the news that is happening today. Being a *Seeds of Peace* alumnus, I have been exposed to many issues globally, through Girls' State I have been helped to understand the political issues taking place right in front of me.

I am proud to be a Girls' State Delegate and am empowered to share this experience with other strong females in my community.

Kelly Maguire

**2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Freedom
Student of Westbrook High School, Westbrook ME
Sponsored by Westbrook Memorial ALA Unit #197, Gorham ME**

What Girls' State Means to Me

Girls' State means waking up at 6:45 in the morning and saluting the flag. It means sharing a meal and the day with the girls in your town. At the beginning of this week, Girls' State meant waking up and spending your whole day with a group of strangers. Doing activities that might challenge your comfort zone. Now as we are nearing the end of this amazing week, Girls' State means something totally different for me. It no longer means sharing a meal and doing activities with strangers. Girls' State now means waking up and spending a day with newly made friends, and fellow residents of the State of Dirigo. To me, Girls' State is a state of mind and an attitude rather than a summer program. It means spending time with people you don't know, but having the privilege to get to know them. It means creating lasting friendships and learning more about yourself. Girls' State is about challenging yourself and having the courage to run for an office or participate in any activity. Girls' State is about building up others even when you fail. To me Dirigo Girls' State is all about learning how to make a difference on every scale, from large to small. That is what Dirigo Girls' State means to me.

Katie Schweizer

2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Hope

Student at George Stevens Academy, Blue Hill ME

Sponsored by Duffy-Wescott ALA Unit #85, Blue Hill ME

What Girls State Means to Me

What does Girls' State mean to me? Girls' State means leaving my small town in Aroostook County, Maine, and becoming a part of Democracy in Courage County for a week. It means being a citizen of the State of Dirigo and striving each day to make a difference in how I view government. It means being an informed contributor to society, one who listens and learns. It means having my own opinions but being willing to listen to others as well.

What does Girls' State mean to me? Girls' State means waking up in the morning for flag raising. It means deepening my appreciation for my country's flag and all it stands for: *One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all*. It means honoring the traditions of those who came before me. It means remembering those who make sacrifices to ensure my freedom. It means reaching out across the divide and connecting with beautiful, strong, intellectual women to start building an even brighter future together.

To me, Girls' State is forever.

Katelyn White

2017 Dirigo Girls State Citizen from the Town of Democracy

Sponsored by Pattee - Page ALA Unit #187, Easton ME

Student at Easton Jr./Sr. High School, Easton ME

What Girls' State Means to Me

"The memories you make at Girls' State are ones you will never forget." This is what we were told us as we sat through the Welcome Assembly. What they didn't tell us is that most of us would learn more here about government than we have ever learned in our 17+ years of living. They weren't wrong about the memory making, there is plenty of that as well, but what I took out of my experience from Girls' State is that it is a place where girls can learn and grow. We learn how to become great leaders. We learn how to step out of our comfort zones and run for position we would never even thought of. We grow confident in our abilities to work in what were once completely male dominated fields. Girls' State to me is a place in which girls can become empowered and educated in order for us to become more involved in the future.

Here at Girls' State we are taught to accept all opinions, whether we agree or not, and I think that is one of the most important lessons to be taught in society today. No matter what we believe in, we should be able to come together to solve issues, and that's what government is about. The lessons I have learned at Girls' State have proven to me how important having a successful government is, and it is these lessons that I will truly never forget.

Emily Curtis

**2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Faith
Student at Foxcroft Academy, Dover-Foxcroft ME
Sponsored by the Trustees of Foxcroft Academy**

What Girls' State Means to Me

Girls' State is the essence of what the state of Maine and the world should strive to be. Girls' State to me is the unity of young women from many different backgrounds, being able to be the person you've always wished to be, and succeeding individually and as a team in ways you would never think.

Girls' State to me is all about young women coming together and doing what they do best, proving to others what they *can* do. It's all about lifting one another up and working together to create peace in a society. It is about meeting new people, being outgoing, trying new things and not being afraid to step outside your comfort zone. It's all about the trials and tribulations of success and failure and when you do succeed how amazing it feels. Girls' State to me is about new friends, new knowledge and new perspectives on a variety of topics.

Ellie Walker

**2017 Citizen of Dirigo Girls' State from the Town of Justice
Student at Gardiner Area High School, Gardiner ME
Sponsored by Smith-Wiley ALA Unit #4, Gardiner ME**