

Combined Americanism Conference

22-24 SEPTEMBER, 2017
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA



Boys State Staff Exchange Program

Jointly presented by Palmetto Boys State and Louisiana Boys State
Benefits and goals based on experiences in June 2017



PBS Director Stephen Lewis

UN Ambassador Nikki Haley





Staff Exchange: PBS/LABS


PBS welcomed Micah Scott, William Hogan, John Jones and Brian Rees from Louisiana Boys State to 2017 PBS Encampment

Through the exchange, PBS gained

- Valuable feedback into practices and procedures
- Affirmation and constructive criticism

LABS gained

- Mentorship from experienced program leaders
- Insight into program structure and coordination
- Feedback on plans for growth and development




Surface Comparisons

1000+ Citizens (PBS) versus 400 Citizens (LABS)

Experience levels of staff – 60 years (PBS) versus 10 years (LABS) for most experienced staff member

Academics teaching style – process overview and broad picture (PBS) versus immersive (LABS)

Other “fun” differences:

- Party and city pride at PBS versus parish pride at LABS
- Citizens walking around at PBS versus column movement at LABS
- Evening retreat at PBS versus morning flag raising at LABS

The PBS/LABS 2017 exchange

How did the programs connect?

- LABS history of watching other programs online
- Earlier plans to attempt day visits
- “The tweet” that started the process

How were logistics worked out?

- Email conversations between programs
- PBS coordinated everything on campus, LABS coordinated getting people there

End result: LABS staff members traveled to and participated in PBS

What did the exchange involve?

Observation of almost all stages of the program from counselor training to closing ceremonies

Active engagement by LABS in some components of the PBS program (e.g. programming booth, electronic voting)

Daily mini-debrief sessions between programs and within each

Taking lots of notes for conversations at later program planning conferences



PBS Learning Opportunities:

The continuity of the PBS staff and staff commitment to both the program and the Legion are positive factors influencing growth and sustainability.

The opportunity to share and thus examine aspects such as electronic voting, electronic surveying, use of social media for instruction, the Inauguration Trip, etc., made PBS better for the experience.

The exchange provided PBS the opportunity to carefully examine and focus on the goal of creating and enhancing a culture of excellence around the program.

LABS Learning Opportunities:

The ability to watch a program with 2.5x enrollment and different structure allowed for valuable comparison of all aspects of program operations and logistics

Conversations about future plans for production, merchandising, electronic voting, fundraising, and more provided constructive criticism and focus

- Combined with conversations with LAGS upon return to Louisiana → benefits for both programs

Conversations (during and continued after the program) with experienced program staff provided invaluable insight and mentorship we would not otherwise have

What's next?

For PBS

- Feedback going into planning conference

For LABS – implementation of ideas

- Coming year: Structural reorganization and production changes
- Long-term: Merchandising and fund raising

For both: Continued engagement

- Continued email and in-person conversations
- Exchange of programmatic materials
- LABS visit to PBS planning conference
- Invitation to host PBS visitors to LABS in 2018

“How to” considerations for an exchange

Finding programs to host

Deciding why to visit a particular program

- What about that program or components of it are you seeking to learn about or from?

Logistics of a visit

- Travel considerations
- Time commitment of participating in two programs during a single month
- Food and housing – not just when and where but also the cost
- Active engagement with visitors during the program
- Designating a host program liaison

How other programs can benefit

Visit South Carolina and Louisiana

Send staff members to visit other states

- Help defray travel costs
- Empower staff members to bring back ideas and then listen to them
- Especially encourage young staff members to participate

Facilitation at the national level

- Coordination of a list of programs willing to host exchanges
- Consider providing an opportunity for an exchange report at this conference each year