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Washington County

On July 25th, 2013, I interviewed the Washington County Manager, Mr. Rhodes, and toured the county administrative buildings. We talked about his position and what it entailed, as well as the additional jobs he juggles as a county manager for a rural county. Following this, I briefly described my goals and what I intend to accomplish in and through 4-H. After he asked me questions and got to know me, he offered to give me a tour of the county administrative buildings.

The first office we went to was the Board of Elections, where I talked to Ms. Dora Bell, the director of elections for Washington County. She told me how she got to where she is today, and explained the jobs in which she is in charge. After that, we went to the courthouse and toured the entire building. Mr. Rhodes took me to many of the different offices and areas in the building and introduced me to the directors/heads of each one. One place I found particularly interesting was the EMS Management, Zoning, and Mapping Building.

While there, I learned that Washington County is in charge of our own EMS system as well as Tyrell County's. I also learned that the office is in charge of broadcasting all warnings during a flood, hurricane, tornado, or major storm, and that during that time they become a 24/7 operation. After the storm or disaster has gone through, they are in charge of clean-up and repair, and once that stage is finished, they are in charge of approving and supplying building permits. After I finished the tour of the administrative buildings, we returned to Mr. Rhodes' office.

One of the coolest things about Mr. Rhodes is that he has an open door policy so people can walk in and talk with him about issues or questions they have. This is a great policy to have when living in a small rural county, where people often do not know where to go to get the

answers they need. Because of this, he does his best to answer questions he can, and when he cannot he points people in the right place to find their answers. Mr. Rhodes went out of his way to accommodate me, and it was apparent that he does the same for many others as well. He seemed to know everyone we met while walking down the road, and he was a generally cheerful man with an upbeat attitude.

Another thing I found commendable about Mr. Rhodes is that he had a kind and professional spirit. Never negative or condescending, he maintained a professional demeanor. A point he made clear while talking to me was that he could be fired and replaced at any time, so he always does his best to stay on top of events and situations. He told me that County Manager is a County Commissioner appointed position, and that as soon as he does not pull his weight he could easily lose his job.

At the end of our meeting, I walked away with new knowledge about our County and some of the offices. I really appreciate how he went out of his way to accommodate me, and how he tried to cover everything he could in the time we had. Overall, it was a great experience and I look forward to seeing him again.